KURIAN MATHOTHU

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF TRIMURTI IN HINDUISM



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MESSAGE

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From The Vatican, 13 July 1971

Dear Father Mathothu,

The Holy Father has asked me to send you this written expression of his gratitude for your devoted gesture in presenting to him, when received last month in audience, a copy of the dissertation "The Development of the Concept of Trimûrti in Hinduism", which you had presented to the Pontifical Urbanian University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology.

His Holiness prays that the Holy Spirit will inspire you to use the greater understanding you have gained through your studies of the elements of truth and goodness which by God's providence are possessed by other religions, in order to share the full light of truth with those who lack it. He invokes upon you and your mission the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the powerful assistance of the Father, and cordially imparts to you and your dear ones his Apostolic Blessing.

Yours sincerely
(signed)
+ J. Benelli

The Reverend Kurian Mathothu
In Care of Bishop's House
PALAI

(True Copy)

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PREFACE

Ever since the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, the Church's outlook on the non-christian religions, among whom she lives and works has undergone a total change. Christ came to save not only man and all that is human, not only what is religious but all the religions of the world. Every creature is oriented towards Christ whether men are aware of it or not. We must say that the religions of the world and all that is religious, are in a state of vocation to salvation. Each one of them yearns for Christ to have their meaning and fulfilment; they all tend towards Christ.

The Vatican Council passed a special document about the relationship of the Church to non-christian religions. It so reads "From ancient times down to the present, there has existed among diverse peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human life; at times, indeed, recognition can be found of a supreme Divinity and of a supreme Father too. Such a perception and such a recognition instil the lives of these peoples with a profound religious sense. Religions bound up with cultural advancement have struggled to reply to these questions—with more refined concepts and in more highly developed language. Thus in Hinduism men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through searching philosophical enquiry. They seek release from the anguish of our condition through ascetical practice or deep meditation or a loving, trusting flight toward God" (Non-christians, No. 2).

This book is an extract of the thesis presented at the Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome. It is a modest attempt to clarify the concept of Trimûrti in Hinduism. Here we must confess that we could not do full justice to the subject referring to the original sanscript texts always. We had to depend mostly upon translations in different languages. As the work is intented mainly for the Christian readers, the Chapter dealing with the Most Holy Trinity has been omitted.

At this juncture we should like to express our heartfelt gratitude to His Ex. Rt. Rev. Dr. Sebastian Vayalil, Bishop of

Palai; to Rev. Fathers Carlo Molari and Cyril B. Papali, O.C.D., the moderators of this work and also to all those who helped us towards the completion of this work.

Palai
1st April 1974 Fr. KURIAN MATHOTHU

INTRODUCTION

"There is no difference between you and us. We have the gods Brahmã, Vishnu and Siva; you have Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We call our God, Iswara, while you call the Supreme, by the name Daiva (Deus, God)". Perhaps it was this statement made by an old illiterate Hindu woman in a household conversation many years ago that has given me the inspiration to make this study on the principal gods of Hinduism. As a matter of fact we were not engaged in any widely announced inter-religious dialogue. It happened casually in the course of an ordinary conversation, which is not unusual in the 'ecumenical life' we lead in the villages. Personal experiences have always a more forceful impact upon us than mere book knowledge.

Ever since the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, the teaching Church speaks very often on the worth and nobility of the non-Christian religions. The new attitude adopted by the Church when the Council approved the decree on the 'Relationship of the Church with the non-Christian religions', was really a surprise even to many of the council fathers.[1]

Formulations of new definitions, suggestions regarding the norms to be adopted in inter-religious dialogues, etc., naturally followed. As it happens very often all these things that circulate in the high circles reach the ordinary men only very late. But as for India dialogue and ecumenism between the Church and the Hinduism in the daily life of the ordinary man were an order of the day even though terms such as Theology, oecumenism, dialogue, etc., were unknown to them. Definitions originating from the experiences of daily life are worthier than those that result from mere speculative works.

Hinduism is so vast and so complex that we may not find any idea of Christianity not touched upon it in one way or another. In the religion of the common people the idea of

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1. Cf. John M. Oesterreicher, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. by Herbert Vorgrimler, vol. iii., New York, 1969, p. 89.
'Timid souls were afraid that the Council fathers had come close to indifferentism when pronouncing this principle—"Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions".

Trimûrti is not insignificant though personal gods like Vishnu, Siva, Rama and others are generally worshipped.

The study of this trinitarian concept of God is of special importance in our days. As we have already seen in the beginning the ordinary religious minded people of the country know something of the idea of God in different religions. But no one has the sufficient knowledge to explain it in a satisfactory manner, nor have many the adequate resources to make further studies. The philosophers and other highly educated Hindu leaders, of course, give rational interpretations, but they rarely come down to the level of the people who really live 'among the numerous gods and goddesses' of the country.

It is here that Christianity confronts Hinduism. The essential situation and yearning for man is every where the same. The questions he asks, wherever he finds himself to be are not different. 'He asks what is the meaning and end of life, what is the good and what is sin, what is the way to true happiness and what is the primeval and ineffable mystery of our existence from which derives our being and for which it longs'.[2] But to these questions he does not receive the same answer from the different people he may meet with in different nations under different cultures.

God who is the one and same for all people has been acting and still present among all peoples for their salvation.[3] Our present task is to discover this God, Our Saviour, whose presence among them was veiled to our non-Christian brethren. At the same time we must confess that if we could not see Christ working among the Hindus also until now, it was because of our human defects such as egoism and selfishness that we tried to project even into the realm of the activity of God. A deep knowledge of the latter's religious concept is presupposed for

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2. Cf. John M. Oesterreicher, art. cit., p. 89.
3. Pope Pius XII, wrote about the all-embracing love of God: "In the first place let us imitate the universality of His love. It is true that Christ has only one Bride, the Church; yet the love of the divine Bridegroom is so universal that in His Bride He embraces without exception every member of the human race. For our Saviour's purpose in shedding His blood was that on the Cross He might reconcile with God all men, held asunder by nationality and race, and bid them come together into one Body". Ency. letter, *The Mystical Body of Christ;* C.T.S. London, 1964, pp. 55-56.

evangelisation in modern times. Our research into the Trinitarian concept of God in Hinduism is really in this perspective. We are only just at the starting point. We cannot enter into this Hindu world without adequate preparation. We must not fail to admit that theirs is a distinct type of religious thought and life which has been evolving through the centuries and so should be treated with due respect. The Church in India faces not any decadent civilisation and superstitious worship as perhaps in the past, but an ancient culture and religion come to life again, relevant, reinterpreted and posing a challenge to the Gospel.[4] Again there is the consciousness that the proclamation does not necessarily mean the kind of preaching we are familiar with. "The basic idea is that we keep quietly discovering and telling ourselves. In so doing the Church exercises its prophetic ministry: it reflects and declares how at a particular place and time, in specific events and developments, God is at work; and thus indicates to itself and others where and when and in what manner to act and collaborate with God."[5]

The suggestions for external adaptations, rites and liturgy are good and praiseworthy. But we cannot stop at that. We have to make substantially constructive work to build up a new theological thought. The wonderful examples of the early centuries in the Graeco-Roman world, where a Christian theology developed in Greek modes of thought, as did a Christian liturgy in the Greek language and in Greek modes of expression; a calendar developed according to Greek and Roman traditions, are meant for our instruction. They tell us how the Church can represent herself in an alien world, receiving forms into herself, while retaining integrally her own Catholic message.[6]

The method followed in this study is simple. As we were engaged into a particular aspect of Hindu theism in its development down the centuries, extension of this great length of time did not affect us greatly. The thought of a period of time

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4. Cf. Samuel Rayan, S. J. and others, *Responsibility of the Church in India Today,* (orientation paper 'F' for the All India seminar, 1969), 1969, New Delhi, pp. 3-4.
5. Ibid. p. 10.
6. Cf. Bede Griffiths, *Christian Ashram, Essays towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue*, London, 1966, p. 182.

reaching to about two thousand years before Christ,[7] did not frighten us in our research as we concentrated our attention on the pertinent texts related to our theme from the Vedas onwards. Rig Veda which lies at the basis of all the Hindu scriptures presents before us the belief of the people of that age, in different gods, presiding over the three divisions of the universe. When we discuss the different gods in the first chapter, we must remember that in that remote period of the Rig Veda, none of the great world religions of today was in existence.[8] As for Hinduism, the Pantheon of the Rig Veda, though could not retain its proper names took other names and appeared later with almost the same characteristics.

Studying the gods of the Trimûrti in the following chapters, relevant passages from the Upanishads, the epics and puranas are selected and interpreted. In all these discussions, the gods are not presented in an impersonal way. They have been dealt with in such a way as to see their relations with humanity for its salvation. In this study into religion and religious beliefs mythological contributions that are of primary importance could not be avoided.

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7. It seems to be opportune to quote Nehru speaking on the antiquity of the Vedic literature. He writes, 'Before the discovery of the Indus Valley civilization, the Vedas were supposed to be the earliest records we possess of Indian culture. There was much dispute about the chronology of the Vedic period, European scholars usually giving later dates and Indian scholars much earlier ones. It was curious, this desire on the part of Indians to go as far back as possible and thus enhance the importance of our ancient culture. Professer Winternitz thinks that the beginnings of Vedic literature go back to 2000 B.C. This brings us very near the Mohenjodaro period.

"The usual date accepted by most scholars today for the hymn of the Rig Veda is 1500 B.C., but there is a tendency, ever since the Mohenjodaro excavations, to date further back these early Indian scriptures. Whatever the exact date may be, it is probable that this literature is earlier than that of either Greece or Israel, that, in fact, it represents some of the earliest documents of the human mind that we possess. Max Muller has called it: "the first word spoken by the Aryan man" Jawaharlal Nehru, '*The Discovery of India*, Calcutta, 1946, p. 75.

8. The gods and religions of Babylon, Persia, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, etc., became unimportant, or altogether disappeared at the advent of Christianity and Islam.

Another important fact to be remembered is that no perfect study on the gods of Hinduism is possible completely independent of the philosophical concepts that give it a rational foundation. In Hinduism we do not find any hard and fast line between religion and poetry and between a poet and a philosopher.[9] We find myths and symbols, sacrificial formulas and philosophical speculations mingled together, that it is impossible to consider one completely separated from the other.

Jawaharlal Nehru once wrote, 'Hinduism as a faith, is vague, amorphous, many sided, all things to all men...In its present form, and even in the past, it embraces many beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, often opposed to or contradicting each other. Its essential spirit seems to be live and let-live.'[10]

By no reason can we say that our study of Trimurti in its different aspects is complete and fully exhaustive. Vast areas in this line of Hindu thought and belief are still to be explored. Unless and until the Church may face this religion—though greatly reformed and reinterpreted in modern times, but still firmly rooted in the vedic foundation—from its own basis, Christ will ever be considered to be a foreigner who came to India from across the sea.

It is under this new light that we have attempted to give our opinions regarding the formulation of an Indian Christian Theology. The All India Catholic Seminar held at Bangalore in 1969 has already taken the initiatives to this new line of thought. Even when we study the term Sacchidananda—the often used name of the Supreme Deity in our days—we find that the presentation of God by the East has no perfect similarity to the West. So basing on Holy Scripture our attempt should be orientated to form a theology that will help the Indian to understand who Christ is in his usual ways of thought. When we think of the great labour that awaits us in this new enterprise, our work is of a very meagre importance. Still there is hope; the 'Light of the Nations' has already begun to shine.

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9. Cf. Van Der Leeuw, *Wegen en Grenzen*, Amsterdam, 1948, p. 153.
10. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 73.

ABBREVIATIONS

BG................Bhagavadgîtã (by Radhakrishnan).
Br. Up...........Brhad-ãranyaka Upanishad.
Ch. Up...........Chãndogya Upanishad.
ERE...............Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.
HVL...............Hindu View of Life.
Isa Up............Isa Upanishad.
JAOS..............Journal of the American Oriental Society.
Ka. Up............Katha Upanishad.
Ke. Up............Kena Upanishad.
Mbh.................Mahãbhãrata.
Mai. Up..........Maitri Upanishad.
Man. Up.........Mãndûkya Upanishad.
Mun. Up.........Mundaka Upanishad.
Pri. Up............The principal Upanishads (by S. Radhakrishnan).
RV..................RigVeda.
S. B.................Sathapatha-Brãhmana.
SBE................Sacred Books of the East (ed. by Max Müller).
Sv. Up............Svetásvatara Upanishad.
Tai. Up............Taittirîya Upanishad.
Vi. P................Vishnu Purâna.
Matsya P...........Matsya Purâna.

CHAPTER I

The Concept of Trimurti in the Early Phase of Hinduism

Hinduism baffles an accurate and proper definition. As S.K. Chatterji says, it is not a single religion with definite creed to which everybody must subscribe. It is rather a federation of different kinds of approach to the Reality that is behind life.[1] Generally the Hindus call their religion Sanatana Dharma, (perennial law), for it is considered to be mainly a way of life. The Hindu religion as it exists now, is the outcome of a progressive development in the course of many centuries.

The concept of Trimûrti (Divine Triad), as we understand it now, is not found in the early stages of the Indian religion. Nevertheless, no one can deny the possibility of this idea being traced from the early vedic days.[2] The idea of Trimûrti, it is

1. Cf. S. K. Chatterji, in *Cultural Heritage of India*, ed. by Haridas Bhattacharyya, Vol. IV, The Religions, p. xix, 1956, Calcutta.
2. The word "veda" from vid, to know, means knowledge par excellence, the sacred wisdom. It is a term applied to divine unwritten knowledge, imagined to have issued like breath from the self-existent. These hymns were composed in Sanskrit, at different times perhaps in the course of several centuries by illumined people (Rishis) among the Indo-Aryan immigrants. It is believed that this knowledge had been directly communicated to these Rishis or inspired sages, who transmitted it not in writing, but through the ear, by constant oral repetition (so it is called *Sruti*),— through a succession of teachers, known as Brahmans. It is true that this inspired knowledge, though its very essence was held to be mystically bound up with "sabda" or "articulate sound", (thought to be eternal), was ultimately written down. Traditionally, there are four vedas: Rig, sama, Yajur and Atharva veda, of these the first three are connected with sacrifice, and are "collections" (Samhitas) or manuals used by the different types of officiating priests; the Rig being the "words" uttered by the priest whose function was to recite, the "sama" being the chant of the chanting priest, and the "Yajus" being the sacrificial formulary employed by Adhvaryu who presided over the actual sacrificial action. The

true, was formed in the Aryan mind in particular circumstances, though its origins go as far back as the Vedic era. The early members of a certain Divine Triad, who were powerful for a time—even for many centuries—sank into oblivion, as the days went by. In their place some other gods who were of very meagre importance previously were pushed to the forefront and thus occupied their places. Meanwhile the Hindu religion was undergoing constant evolution. Many substantial changes took place in the heart of that religion. Those who had discovered their gods in the forces of nature began to placate them with sacrifices. Even though they continued to personify the different forces of nature as different gods, who were helpful to them for material prosperity, and tried to offer sacrifices to each and every one of them, they did not consider them to be mutually distinct supreme Beings. This indicated the opening of a new era. Philosophers of the time began to reason about absolute realities. Rational inquiries were made about the root cause of the universe, its origin, preservation and final destiny. Philosophic thought appeared in a systematic way in this period —the period of the Aranyakas and Upanishads. As a result of this the seers arrived at the supreme which they called Brahman, who, according to them, is devoid of all characteristics. But how can the common folk adore and understand a Supreme Being who is devoid of all qualities, a God who, in other words, is absolutely Nirguna? So the seers thought of interpreting the theory of Brahman in a manner intelligible to the man in the street. The Absolute Brahman thus began to be thought of in a personal form, and was regarded as responsible for everything that takes place in this visible world.

Still most of the interpretations of the philosophers remained unintelligible to the common man. The common people were adoring particular divinities from very early times. They wanted to imagine God in a personal form to whom they could pray and on whom they could depend in their needs. They

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fourth one called the Atharva Veda is a later production, since earliest text books speak of only three vedas. It concerns chiefly with more personal matters—incantations and spells of every conceivable kind, spells to drive demons away, to cure diseases, or to procure the love of a woman. (Cf. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, London, 1875, p. 7; *pri. Up.* p. 28; R. C. zaehner, *Hinduism*, London, 1966, pp. 37-38).

could accept and understand a Supreme Being only if it is thought of as a God who manifests himself in various visible forms. The present study is confined to the problem of Trimûrti, the Divine Triad, which became popular in the latter part of the Hinduism, especially in the time of the purãnas.[3] But the religious and philosophical basis of this idea will have to be sought in a far anterior time, as we saw above. In this chapter we shall study the evolution of the concept of Trimûrti in the early phase of Hinduism, i.e., in the vedic times.

Trinity in different Religions.

The idea of God appearing in a triple form is not something peculiar to Hinduism. This concept is of supreme importance in almost all religions whether ancient or modern. But the triadic concept was not the first idea that humanity maintained in its view of God. Prof. Maxmüller is of opinion that the Indians, Greeks and the Latins invoked God the common Father. He arrived at this conclusion from his study of the three major languages. He writes: "If I were asked what I consider the most important discovery which has been made during the nineteenth century with respect to the ancient history of mankind, I should answer by the following short line: Dyaus, pita=Zeus, Pater=Jupiter. It implies that our own ancestors and the ancestors of Homer and Cicero (The Greeks and the Romans) spoke the same language as the people of India. This is a discovery, which, however incredible when sounded at first, has long ceased to cause any surprise, but it implies and proves that they all had once the same faith, and worshipped for a time the same name—a name which meant Heaven-Father.[4]

The Latin equivalent to this term is *Trinitas*. It is believed that it was Tertullian, the Christian Apologist, who first employed the term *Trinitas*. The corresponding Greek term Trias (Triad), was first used by Theophilus, who also was a Christian

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3. Indologists say that the concept of Trimurti, has its origin in the Vth century A.D. (cf. p. Masson-Oursel and others, in *L'Inde Antique et la Civilisation Indienne*, Paris, 1933, p. 207).
4. Quoted in *History of Hindu Triad*, publ. by Christian Literature Society for India, London, Madras, 1897, p. 3.

apologist and contemporary of Tertullian. Tertullian, as it was the practice of the subsequent times, used this term to designate the Christian doctrine of God, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

The idea of a certain trinity in God is found in the Egyptian religion too. It speaks of a divine family constituting a Father, Mother and Son represented by Osiris, Isis, and Horus respectively.[5] The idea of God as trinity is not confined to historical religions only. We see it in the neo-platonic view of the supreme reality as suggested by plato in the Timaeus. As for example in the philosophy of plotinus, the primary or original realities are traditionally represented as the good or (in numerical symbol) One, the intelligence or the One-many, and the world-soul or the One and Many. A triad of gods is found in zoroastrianism too.[6] Buddhism suggests a kind of Trinity, which of course is different from the trinitarian concept of other religions. By it the Buddhists mean (i) spiritual body (of Buddha) (ii) his joyful body (showing Buddha rewarded for his virtues) and (iii) his fleshy body, under which Buddha appeared on earth as man.[7] But the Buddhistic trinity, as represented by the modern schools which place side by side three images, lacks completely the true signification of a unity in Trinity.[8]

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5. "The Yesterday of death is associated with Osiris, the God of the dead. The "tomorrow" of rebirth is associated with the ever rising Sun and with the accession of Horus to the rule of his father Osiris (cf. James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, (3 ed.), princeton, 1966, p. 4, foot note no. 10).
6. Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-359, B.C.) reads on the columns built by Darius I at Susa: By the grace of Ahuramazda and Anahita, and Mithra, I reconstructed this hall of columns. May Ahuramazda, Anahita and Mithra protect me from all injury, and may they neither injure nor destroy this (hall of columns) which I have constructed. (cf. Jack Finegan, *Archeology of World Religions*, Princeton, 1952, p. 98).
7. *Ibid*. p. 413.
8. The Buddhistic Trinity is called Trikaya, the three fold body of the Buddha, viz, Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya. He who wears the Dharmakaya is on the threshold of Nirvana, for he is one with the Dharma itself. The Sambhogakaya is best understood in relation to the third of Trinity, the Nirmanakaya. The latter is not, as often stated, the physical body of a Buddha, but looks like a physical body, yet is made of finer matter, being used by the great ones of the earth for the teaching of mankind (Christmas Humphreys, *Buddhism*, London, 1967, pp. 18, 57, 154).

Like the Buddhists, Taoists also speak of a certain trinity. It could be even said that it is an imitation of the Buddhistic trinity. Their trinity consists in worshipping Lao Tzu under the three pure Ones, viz., (i) as the original revered God, (ii) as the supreme ruler Tao, and (iii) as the supreme ruler Lao Tzu. Even the Almighty God (Tien) is ranked below these three forms of Lao Tzu.[9]

Importance of the Number Three.

It is not easy to ascertain why the Aryans show a tendency to attach a sacred importance to the number three. In the classification of gods they always followed a pattern of three. Very often this was made in correspondence with the various divisions visible in the nature, such as the three regions of the universe, etc, to each of which they assigned particular gods. "There is even ground for conjecturing that triads of natural objects, such as sky, Atmosphere, and Sun or three forms of the Sun, called Aryaman, Varuna and Mitra were associated together and worshipped by the primitive Aryans in the earliest times."[10]

In every stage of the development of the Hindu religion we see the importance of this number. In the Vishnu Smriti (Institutes of Vishnu), it is described how three persons, Father, Mother and Guru (teacher) are to be respected: "A man has three Atigurus (specially venerable superiors). His father, his mother, and his spiritual teacher. To them he must always pay obedience......Let them never do anything without their leave. Those three are equal to the three vedas (Rig, Sama and Yajur), they are equal to the three Gods (Brahman, Vishnu, and Siva), they are equal to the three worlds (of men, of gods, and of Brahman), they are equal to the three fires."[11]

Again in the "Law of Manu", "Obedience towards those three is declared to be the best (form of) austerity, let him not perform other meritorious acts without their permission. For they are declared to be the three worlds, they are three (principal) orders, they are three vedas, and they are three sacred

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9. Cf. Jackfinegan, *opus cit.*, p. 413.
10. Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, London, 1887, p. 5.
11. *Institutes of Vishnu, SBE.* VII, 31. 1-7.

fires. The father forsooth, is stated to be the Garhapatya Fire, the mother the Dakshinagni, but the teacher the Ahavamya fire; this triad of fires is most venerable. He who neglects not those three (even after he has become a house holder), will conquer the three worlds and, radiant in body like a God, he will enjoy bliss in heaven. By honouring his mother he gains this (nether) world, by honouring his father the middle sphere, but by obedience to his teacher the world of Brahman."[12]

These two passages from the sacred books are of great importance to our purpose. Here there is reference to three worlds, three principal orders, three sacred fires. The three members of Trimûrti are also brought together. But it must be noted that in the Law Book of Manu, which stands at the head of Smriti.[13] There is nothing to support the theory of a Triad of deities.

Classification of God's, according to the Division of the Universe

The vedic seers were very simple in the classification of the visible universe. They divided the whole universe into three worlds. The upper, middle, and the lower world. Corresponding to the upper world, there is the sky, to the lower world, the earth, and to the atmosphere, which unites both these, is the middle world. Basically it was this triple division of the universe that caused the division of gods also into three main groups. They divided their gods into highest, middle and lowest, or into those of the upper sky, of the atmosphere and of the earth. Three periods into which the vedic theology was divided are: i) that of the special worship of sky-gods, when less attention was paid to others; ii) that of the atmospheric and mateorological divinities; iii) that of the terrestrial powers. The later groups were progressively absorbing the earlier ones. True gods of the Veda constituted a Trinity of deities. They were the

12. *Laws of Manu,* SBE. vol. xxv. 2. 229-233.
13. Smriti signifies that which is remembered and handed down by tradition. Generally this group is understood to comprise the Sutras (aphorisms, usually philosophic in content), the Law Books (books on dharma in the narrower sense), the Purânas (mythological works extolling one or other of the great gods) and finally the two epics, (Mahabhârata and Ramayana). In its widest acceptation it includes the whole post vedic literature (cf. R. C. Zaehner, *opus cit.,* p. 10).

fire god (the earth born Agni), the Rain God (the air born Indra) and the Sun God (the skyborn surya or Savitr), one for each of the three worlds: Earth, Air and Sky (Bhur, bhuvah, Svar). These three gods were the special objects of worship of the early Indo-Aryan colonialists. All other principal deities were either modifications of, or associated with, one or other of the members of this vedic Trinity. For example, the wind (Vãyu) and the storm gods (Maruts), led by the destroying God (Rûdra), were regarded as intimate associates of the rain God Indra, and were really only forms and modifications of that God. On the other hand the ancient Aryan deities, varuna, and Mitra, with Vishnu, were all forms of the Sun (Surya or Savitri). He was also called pushan. On discussing the Fire God, who is one of the members of the vedic Triad, we shall find that even surya, the great god in all pagan systems, has been considered a form of fire. Fire appears as Sun in the sky and as lightning in the clouds.

Authors do not agree one another regarding the precise number of gods. But usually the number of gods is stated to be thirty three in the Rigveda and Atharva veda, as well as in the Brahmanas.[14] This is a multiple of three which is a sacred number, about which we have already spoken. The universe is also divided into three worlds. It is probable that the Vedic men have classified gods into three groups of eleven, each world being thus protected by eleven gods. This number however, is not exhaustive, for other gods are mentioned in addition to the thirty three. The absence of any established tradition in this matter is shown by the Brahmanas, which recognise the 33 gods and agree in making them out to include eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, and twelve Adityas, though they differ regarding the remaining two. The satapatha Brahmana gives either Dyaus and prthivi with a thirty-fourth in prajãpati, or Indra and prajãpati (SB. iv.5.7.2; xi.6.3.5).

The triple division is adopted by Yaska in his Nirukta (Vii. 5) as he divides the gods according to the three worlds.[15] Yaska

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14. Cf. Louis Renou, *Vedic India* (Trans. by philip Spratt) Calcutta, 1957, p. 57. The author divides the gods also according to their functions: *Sovereign gods,* Varuna, Mitra, etc., warrior gods, Indra and his group, the Maruts who are associated with Rudra; the *solar divinities* vishnu and Asvins; The deified manifestations of the cult, Agni and Soma; and the minor or later established gods.
15. Cf. A. B. Keith, *Religion and philosophy of Veda,* London, 1925 p. 86; The scholars do not agree among themselves when they

records that in the opinion of the school of Niruktas the whole of the deities could be reduced to three, Agni on earth, Vayu in the air, or in place of Vayu Indra, and Surya in heaven. The doctrine might have owed its origin to such passages as the Rigveda verse: May Surya protect us from heaven, Vata from air, agni from the earthly regions (Rv. x. 158.1).

Hopkins gives another explanation for this vedic division. According to him God the Father brooded over (did penance, as one doing penance remains in meditation) the worlds, and from them extracted essences: Fire from earth, Wind from air, Sun from sky. Again the Father performed austerities over these three divinities. Then did come out Rig Veda from the fire and Yajur Veda from the wind, while Sun produced Sama Veda.[16]

But this division cannot be admitted as it is. Where a god has different activities, his name is repeated in more than one sphere. Thus Tvastr (Sûrya) and prthvi (earth) appear in all three divisions, Agni and Usas in the aerial and terrestrial, and Varuna, Yama and Savitr in the aerial and celestial[17., 18].

Inter-relation of Gods and the Tendency towards Unification.

Side by side with the triple division, we see the close relation of the principal gods in their fields of activity. The sages easily exchange the qualities of one God with the other.[19] From

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speak of the date of Yaska. Traditionally it is accepted to be about 1000 B.C. But some fix it about 900 B.C., while others place it at a much later date, namely 400 B.C. (thus we have for example Monier Williams). What we know for certain is that Yaska is one of the oldest and important commentators of the Rig Veda. Nirukta is the vedic interpretation by Yaska, most important and ancient.

16. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, London, 1896, p. 222.
17. A. B. Keith, *Religion and Phil*......opus cit., p. 87
18. R. C. Zaehner states that eventhough this tripartied classification is accepted by the ethnological school, it sees the distinction not so much as between heaven, atmosphere and earth as between the three great classes into which vedic society seems to have been divided—Brahmin (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors, among whom were included the kings), and Vaisyas (the mass of common people, peasants and artisans). Zaehner, *Hinduism, opus cit.*, pp. 17, 18.
19. R. C. Zaehner, *opus cit.*, p. 24; A. B. Keith, *The Mythology of all Races*, Vol. vi, Boston, 1917, p. 19.

the beginning, the view that different gods, though in diverse forms, exercise the same power, was not altogether unknown to the vedic poet. Thus Agni by the Fire repels demons, but Indra performs the same feat with thunder bolt, and the two gods agreeing in part, come to agree in whole. The task of extending the earth and of proping the air and the sky is one which is attributed to very varied gods; it can as easily be performed by Varuna as by Indra or by Vishnu; by the first as the upholder of the physical order of the universe, by Indra as the great active God, and by Vishnu as the Strider (RV. I. 22. 17) through the worlds. A kind of Syncretism also was being developed at this period. It was chiefly in connection with the elements of nature. Thus the water is on the one hand divine in itself, but from the waters of the clouds springs forth the fire of the lighting, and that fire in its descent to earth enters into the water. The water contains, therefore, always an element of fire, and Agni himself is accordingly the son of the waters, thus commingling in its nature two diverse elements.[20] The tendency of a progressive interrelation of gods is evident in the Rig Veda. The Rig vedic poet says: Thou at thy birth art Varuna, O Agni; when thou art kindled thou becomest Mitra. In Thee, O son of strength, all gods are centred. Indra art Thou to man who brings oblation (RV. v. 3. 1).

The philosophical enquiry leading to the discovery of the Absolute Brahman in the Upanishads takes its origin in the Vedic religion.[21] It is mentioned: They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and he is heavenly nobly-winged Garutman. To that is One sages give many a title: they call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan.[22] He is the One bird, whom wise singers shape, with songs, in many figures (RV. x. 114. 5.) This passage shows a tendency towards a monotheistic view, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. However, when the individual gods were invoked, they were not considered as limited by the power of others, as superior or inferior in rank. Each God is to the mind of the suppliant as good as all the gods.[23]

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20. A. B. Keith, *Religion and Phil......opus cit.*, p. 88.
21. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
22. RV. 1. 164. 46. The Sun (Surya) is called Garutman. All these names, says the poet, are names of one and the same Divine being, the One Supreme Spirit under various manifestations.
23. Prof. MaxMüller depicts this as Henotheism (eis, enos = one)

Anthropomorphism of the Vedic Gods.

The gods under our discussion were really conceived anthropomorphically. In their simplicity of thought the Aryans believed that the gods also were similar to them. They were considered to be essentially human in nature, though endowed with supernatural powers. They need food, fight battles, experience joy and sorrow. We read: "Let our strong drink, most excellent, exhilerating, come to thee, victorious Indra! bringing gain, immortal, conquering in fight" (RV. 1. 175. 2) "Indra, Impetuous One, hath waxed immensely; he with his vastness hath filled earth and heaven" (RV. IV 16. 5.).

In their view, the gods were not immortal. The Atharva veda and the Brahmanas state that the gods were originally mortal. It was by practising austerity that they achieved immortality. According to Rig Veda they became immortal by drinking Soma juice: "We have drunk Soma and became immortal; we have attained the light, the gods discovered".[24] But in another pas-

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which is different from monotheism and polytheism. Here the particular divinity invoked is considered to be supreme and absolute. All the supreme qualities are attributed to him. All the rest save the one who fulfills their desires disappear from the vision of the worshippers. Cf. MaxMüller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion, as Illustrated by the Religions of India*, London, 1891, pp. 266-267; O. Lacombe in *Religions*, publ. by Secretariatus pro non Christianis, Roma, 1970, p. 301.

24. Soma, though a drink is considered as a deity of the terrestrial regions. The nineth book of Rig Veda is chiefly devoted to the god Soma. Soma is a plant, the roots of which when pressed give the juice of immortality. Its exhilerating power is dealt upon chiefly in connection with Indra, whom it inspires in his mighty conflicts, which bestowed immortality on the gods, being called Amrta (allied to the greek Ambrosia), the immortal draught. In the hymns to Soma, the pressing of the sacred juice through a woolen filter into a Vat containing milk and water, is likened to all manner of celestial phenomena; with which it would appear to have nothing to do. As the juice is a liquid it is compared to rain, and Soma thus becomes the Lord of stream. The yellow colour of the plant is compared to the lightning. Soma gets assimilated to the Sun and hence fills both Heaven and Earth with its rays. Cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, p. 21. In some of the later hymns of the Rig Veda (ix. 100. 2, etc.), Soma begins to be somewhat obscurely identified with Moon. In the later Hindu scriptures it is more explicit. The waning of the Moon is so explained that

sage the God Agni is invoked as the immortal One, who gives immortality to other gods (RV. iii. 9.1). The degree of anthropomorphism exhibited by the vedic deities is extremely variable. In some cases the active element is constantly present and the view taken may be set down as almost animatistic.[25] Surya, the Sun, by his rising is born as the child of the sky; but the constant presence of the actual deity prevents any real development of anthropomorphism. The God Agni never appears different from his element fire. When hidden in the waters or in the clouds, he remains as fire. He is the fire of sacrifice, burning up to heaven, thus acting as a messenger of men He unites gods and men. But if Agni is thus personified, how can the innumerable fires on earth be explained? Strictly speaking he must be present in each. Indra, on the other hand, is conceived in a different way. He is not seen in the nature, as we see Sun, fire etc. He is conceived as the one who is the author of the thunderstorm. Again his fierce nature entitled him as the war God of the conquering Aryans. Varuna is even more free from traces of nature, his essential nature has nothing to do with his *natural* background: He is the Lord of Holy order, the watcher of men whose vigilance no one can escape.

Parents of Gods.

The vedic men in their way of understanding the nature of gods, saw that the gods also must originate from a pair,[26] by the association of a male and a female element; in other words,

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the gods and fathers are engaged in consuming the Ambrosia contained in it. In post vedic literature Soma is a regular name for Moon.

But N. B. Pavgee, in an article states that Soma is not a liquor. He reasons that liquor is one of the seven heinous sins, forbidden by vedic scriptures. Its preparation also differs from the way, liquor is made. (Cf. N. B. pavgee, "Soma juice is not liquor", art in *proceedings and transactions of the third Oriental Conference*, Madras, 1924, pp. 70, 71).

25. A. B. Keith., *opus cit.*, p. 58.

26. The idea of parentage has the most varied forms. What is prior in time is the parent of the subsequent phenomenon; thus the Dawn is born of night, though she is also her greater sister, and yet generates the Sun; and again, the sacrifices of the Fathers are said to produce the Dawns, since they take place before the appearence of dawn......Sometimes the gods are represented by the seers as

they discovered the parents of the gods. All the important gods of vedas, and also those who became prominent in the later purãnic age, like the members of the Trimûrti, found their common parents in Heaven and earth, as Father and Mother respectively. The Father God of Heaven is named Dyaus.[27] Heaven is generally seen associated with prithvi (Earth) forming the divine couple, in the various hymns dedicated to them. "Dyaus is my Father, my begetter: kinship is here. This great earth is my kin and Mother (RV. 1. 164. 33). "Widely capacious pair, mighty that never fail, the Father and the Mother keep all creatures safe, the two world-halves,[28] the spirited, the

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measuring out the sky and the earth, and thus the paradox arises that they produce their own parents, and it can be said of Indra that from his own body he produced his father and his mother. Agni, again, is the child of waters, which contain the fire of lightning, and the rain cloud is the mother of the lightning and of the waters (cf. A. B. Keith, *Religion and*............pp. 80-81).

27. The Indian Dyaus, the Roman Jupiter, the Greek Zeus and the Germanic God Tyr-Zio, are forms evolved in the course of history from that primeval sky divinity, and that their very names reveal the original twofold meaning of "light (day)" and "sacred (Cf. the sanskrit "div", "shine", "day", dyaus, "sky"; dios, dies; deivos, dives). Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, (Trans. by Rosemary Sheed), London, year not given), p. 66; As in the manifold creation myths and fertility cults, we see in India too, the mother Earth being considered as the great goddess (above book, pp. 2, 91, 253).

28. The division of the universe into three worlds is not always followed through out the Rig veda. A number of hymns could be cited, which consider the universe divided into two halves "......Between the wide spread world halves is the birth place: the Father laid the daughter's germ, within it" (RV. 1. 164. 33). According to Griffith, Heaven and Earth form the double halves of the world. The firmament or space between these two is, as the region of the rain, the womb of all beings. Here the Father is Dyaus and the daughter is Earth whose fertility depends upon the germ of rain laid in the firmament (R.T.H. Griffith, *Rig Veda*, Publ. in the Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, p. 164). W. N. Brown also speaks of a double division of the universe according to the vedic poets, but he brings new members to both groups. He says: The universe for the vedic man was constituted of two parts; one being that the sky over it and the atmosphere between the two. This is "sat" (Existence). The other below the earth, reached by a great chasm was a place of horror, inhabited only by demons and called the "asat" (the non-existence) (cf. W.N. Brown, *The Creation myths of Rig veda*, in JAOS, 62, (1962) pp. 85-108).

beautiful, because the Father hath clothed them in goodly forms" (RV. 1. 160. 2). "Extolled in song, O Heaven and Earth, bestow on us, ye mighty pair, great glory and high lordly sway..." (RV. 1. 160. 5).[29]

CELESTIAL GODS

Sûrya (Sun).

His bright rays bear him up aloft, the God who knoweth all that lives, Sûrya, that all may look on him (RV. 1. 50, 1). Looking upon loftier light above the darkness we have come, to Surya, God among the gods, the light that is most excellent: (RV. 1. 50. 10).

Sûrya, etymologically allied to the greek Helios, in his various aspects, came to play a great part in the religious life of the Rigvedic people. The solar divinities attracted the Hindu minds even in later times.

The hymns of the Rig Veda are full of references to Sûrya and his various aspects, which testify the great position which this God held in those times. There are at least six hymns entirely dedicated to Sûrya. The god was known under various titles; Savitar (RV. 1. 22. 5.), Pushan (1. 23. 13, vi. 53-59), Bhaga (1. 24. 5), Vivasvan (I. 46. 13), Mitra (iii. 59. 1), and Vishnu.[30] J. N. Banerjee explains these names: "Savitar, the stimulator of everything, denoted his abstract qualities. Pushan specified the benevolent power of the sun manifested chiefly as a "pastoral deity". Bhaga, according to Yaska, presides over the forenoon. Vivasvan appears to have originally represented the rising sun; but later came to be regarded as the first sacrificer, an ancestor of human race. Mitra's connection with Surya is a little obscure in the Rigveda, he being mainly associated with the God Varuna. Vishnu is the solar deity who will become the supreme one later on".[31] In some hymns Sun is described as a celestial bird called Garutman. He is the shining god par ex-

29. The number of hymns in praise of these parent gods can be multiplied (RV. 1. 89. 4:x. 132. 1).
30. In the beginning Vishnu was a Sun god.
31. J. N. Banerjee, *Puranic and Tantric Religion*, Calcutta, 1966, p. 135.

cellence, the deva,[32] the red ball of the sky. But he is also the active force, the power that wakes...rouses, enlivens, and as such it is he who gives all good things to mortals and to gods. As the god who gives life, he is the author of birth, and is prayed to for children. He triumphs over the darkness and the witches, drives away sickness and evil dreams and prolongs life. Sun who is the child of Heaven and Earth, is the priest who sanctifies the worlds with his surpassing power (RV. 1. 160. 3).

In the mind of the devotee Sûrya is the Supreme God. He prays, "The brilliant presence of the gods hath risen, the eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni, the soul of all that moveth not or moveth, the sun hath filled the air and earth and heaven (RV. 1. 115. 1).

Sun is adored thrice a day; in the morning, at noon and in the evening.[33]

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32. Deva, "luminous ones", is a word closely related to the latin Deus. But we see a difference between the Indians and the Iranians in this context. In India the Aryans called their gods devas and Asuras, but soon came to look upon the devas as good gods and upon the asuras as evil demons. In Iran the Aryans used the same two words, save that the "s" of India was "h" in their language and thus asura became ahura. The differentiation between the devas and the ahuras, moreover, was carried out in diametrical opposition. In Iran the devas became for the most part the evil spirits. Thus, for example, Indra was a prominent and beneficient deity in India but appeared in Iran as a demon. Only a few of the good gods in India, such as Mitra and Soma (Haoma), were the objects of equal reverence in Iran. The Ahuras on the other hand, were not demons as in India but "Lords" or "masters" who became the real gods of Iran. Cf. JACK FINEGAN, *Archeology of world Religions*, p. 69; R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism* p. 26.
33. The Hindus, especially Brahmins even today worship the Sun in this manner. In the morning, they used to take bath in the river. When the bath is over, standing still in the water, facing the East, they worship the Sun. Just before the prayers, the Brahmin takes water in his hands three times, makes a libation to the sun by letting the water run off the tips of his fingers. While worshipping they say the following prayer. "O Sun God! You are Brahmâ at your rising, Rudra at noon, and Vishnu when setting. You are the jewel of the air, the king of the day, the witness of everything that takes place on earth". (Conf. Abbe J.A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*, Oxford, 1906, pp. 242-243). Thus all the three persons of Trimurti are invoked in the morning prayer. But here Surya acts as the three great gods joined together, or in other words it is Surya himself who appears as Brahmâ, Vishnu and Siva in different times.

Sûrya in Later Scriptures.

The Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the Sutras allude to the worship of Sûrya and his many aspects. The Rishi Kaushitaki who adored the Sun in the morning, at noon and in the evening to expiate his sins, has also laid down the three mantras with which the rising Sun, the Sun on the meridian and the setting sun are to be worshipped (Kaushitaki Bra. Upanishad, II. 5).

To him is addressed the most famous stanza of Rig Veda—the Gayatri Mantra, with which he was in ancient times invoked in the beginning of Vedic study.[34] In the Aranykas, Upanishads, Grihya sutras, the epics Ramayana and Mahabhārata we find a number of references to the Sun god.

Krishna promotes Sun Worship

Even Vasudeva Krishna, the Avatār (incarnation) of Vishnu, the Supreme God, is a promoter of the Sun-worship. Samba, the son of Vasudeva Krishna, was cursed by his father to the effect that he might be attacked with leprosy, for some serious offence on his part. When he prayed to Krishna, to get himself cured, he was advised to worship the Sun for the purpose.[35]

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34. "Tat Savitar Varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyah, vah nah prachodyat! (RV. iii. 62. 10). This famous hymn has been rendered into english in many different forms: "Let us meditate on that adorable splendour of the divine vivifier; May he illumine our understanding", Max Muller (quoted by Fr. Zacharias, O.C.D. *An Outline of Hinduism,* Alwaye, 1956, 1. 113). "May we attain that excellent glory of Savitar the God: so may He stimulate our prayers", (R.T.H. Griffith, opus cit., Vol. I, p. 390). "We meditate on the honoured effulgence of the Sun-God, which may influence us in the performance of our duties" (Satyavata Samasrami, quoted by J. N. Banerjee, *opus cit.,* p. 158). The following interpretation of this celebrated verse makes it more clear: "Let us adore the supremacy of that divine Sun, the godhead, who illuminates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards his holy seat" (Sir W. Jones, quoted by R.T.H. Griffith, vol. 1, p. 390). The name Gayatri is derived from the metre in which it is composed. The Gayatri is a common metre containing three lines of eight syllables.
35. Cf. J.N. Banerjee, *opus cit.,* p. 141.

Varuna.

The next important deity of the celestial regions, from among the vedic gods, to be discussed is Varuna.[36] This god is probably related to the greek Ouranos or Heaven, and is a rival of Indra, the greatest of the vedic gods.[37] Varuna has got many qualities in common with the Iranian God Ahura Mazda. Both these gods are the descendants of an Indo-Iranian god of the shining sky, who is the Supreme god. The Rig vedic text does not give direct and unmistakable data for the natural basis of Varuna. There are many hymns which name Sun as the eye of Varuna.[38] But the Sun who is his eye is also his spy. Seeing all things he reports them to the twin monarchs Varuna and Mitra, for he is the universal lord who surveys the deeds of men.[39] There was a tendency to relate everything grand and beautiful to Varuna: he puts on the worlds and the clans like a garment.[40] His appearance is golden, he is king of hallowed might, sustaineth erect the Tree's stem in the baseless region (RV. I. 24. 7), he made the spacious pathway for the Sun to travel (1. 24. 8), he

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36. There are authors who do not consider him as exclusively a sky divinity, for, in the vedic texts, the stress does not always fall on his sky characteristics, but often on his quality of sovereign. The faithful feel "like slaves" in his presence (RV. I. 25. 1.) and the attitude of humility is to be found in the worship of no other god as with Varuna (cf. Geiger, *Die Amesa Spentas,* Vienna, 1916. pp. 154-157; J. Gonda, The concept of a personal God in ancient Indian Religious Thought. art. in *La Realite Supreme dans les Religions non-Chretiens,* Rome, 1968, p. 111.
37. Regarding the etymological signification of Varuna, authors differ in opinion. The name is derived from the root, *vr,* and so signifies encompasser, container. (Dr. Zimmermann, art. in *proceedings and Transactions of the third Oriental Conference,* Madras, Dec, 1924, p. 115); Some explain his name in relation to his power of "binding" (RV. 1. 24. 15). According to H. Peterson, Guntert and Dumezil, the word comes from the Indo-European root uer which means "to bind" (Sanskrit, varatra-"strap, rope"). Cf. Mircea Eliade, *patterns* in...opus cit., p. 70). Varuna is always pictured with a rope in his hand (cf. Bergaigne, *La Religion vedique d'apres les hymns du Rig Veda,* paris, 1878-83 vol. iii, p. 114).
38. "Do homage unto Varuna's and Mitras Eye, offer this solemn worship to the mighty God", (RV. x. 37. 1. Again vii. 61. 1, 63. 1, 5 etc.)
39. R.C. Zaehner, *opus cit.,* p. 30.
40. RV. viii. 41. 7, "He wraps the regions as a robe".

shines with bright rays, pervading all three earths and fills the three superior realms of Heaven (viii. 41. 9). Sun, who was seen to be the supreme god had been fixed there by the god Varuna (vi. 87. 1). Varuna appears as the lineal descendant of Dyaus pitar, the old God Father, corresponding to Jupiter and Zeus. No heir of the god-Father Dyaus is seen besides Varuna. Thus he appears to be the celestial Brahman par excellence. As supreme Lord, He himself does all the functions of the later Divine Triad from creation onwards.

Varuna appears as a creator of all beings, all the existing things together, as well as certain provinces of the universe in particular.[42] "All these are Varuna's holy operations" says the poet. But one thing is to be noticed here. The creation is not meant here as something produced from nothing—ex nihilo; creation, appears here to be a second thought, a logical conclusion, from the daily exercise of his special rule known as rta. It means the ordering of an already existing matter into an intelligible form. In this sense Varuna creates heaven and earth, but heaven and earth can in no wise encompass or contain him.[43]

Varuna's knowledge and wisdom, providence and power, are more clearly delineated than those of any other deity in the vedic myth. The kind of rule by which he governs the universe is called *Rta* (cosmic order, law, truth, reality, will). He is the lord of moral order too.[44] He is omniscient and therefore witnesses man's truth and falsehood. He is the forgiver of sins (RV. 1. 24. 14). He is gracious to the penitent, releasing men not only from their own sins, but also from those committed by their fathers. Passages are abounding in which his mercy is requested: "O bright and powerful God, through want of strength I erred and went astray: Have mercy, spare me, O, Mighty Lord" (RV. vii. 89. 3).

But Varuna punishes the wicked binding them with fetters.

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42. Dr. Zimmermann, Bombay, *Art. cit.*, p. 115.
43. Varuna, hear this call of mine: be gracious unto us this day Longing for help I cried to thee. Thou, O wise God, art Lord of all, thou art the king of earth and heaven: Hear, as thou goest on thy way (RV. I. 25-19, 20). Like other Gods he has his abode in heaven, which is a lofty one with thousand columns and a thousand doors.
44. Cf. C.B. papali, in *Religions*, publ. by, Secretariatus pro non-Christianis, Rome, 1970, pp. 478-481.

He has the power of binding and loosing, forgiving and punishing. Varuna is a moral god, but the nature of his moral law remains undisclosed. Men sin in the dark and as they sin Varuna ensnares them in his "fetters" and visits them with his wrath. Sin is the fetter with which Varuna binds men, and as he binds in his wrath, so can he loose in his loving-kindness. "O Varuna, untie the upper fetter, untie the middle, untie the lower" (RV. 1. 24. 15).[45]

Rivalry between Indra and Varuna.

Among the Indian gods rivalry, conflict, victory and supremacy are very normal. This was seen from the very beginning, continued through the centuries, and appeared even among the members of the Trimûrti. It is in the background of these conflicts that the old gods disappeared, with the arrival of the new ones.

The God Varuna is in conflict with the other chief god Indra, who pervades the atmosphere. In the beginning there was cooperation among them, but later they became rivals which resulted in the disconfiture of the Asura king Varuna. One (Indra) was called "Monarch" and the other "Autocrat" (R.V. vii. 82. 2). In vii. 82-85 the two gods work together, but their functions are contrasted. Indra lays low the enemy in battle, but varuna does this by watching over the cosmic law. Varuna as guardian of the law and truth, is quick to anger, while Indra gives his friends spacious dwellings. In the hymn (IV. 42) the rivalry between the two principal gods comes to the summit. Here Varuna asserts his primacy and takes in to himself all the qualities of Indra. If the celestial, atmospheric and earthly gods together form one unique triad, which precedes the later Trimûrti, it would be difficult to understand the rivalry between these superior gods.

Later Varuna lost all his importance as a principal god. But in him we see something in common with the later great God Siva.[46] Varuna was even dethroned by Indra; his ordinances and

45. R.C. Zaehner., *opus cit.*, p. 31.
46. "In a sense he (Siva) is an exaggerated version of Varuna", cf. R.C. Zaehner, p. 33.

his rta, his cosmic order, truth, righteousness etc., were to live in the "dharma" of later times, and his "māyā", the "uncanny power" by which he creates and acts got transformed into the creative power of Rudra-Siva. These are expressed in the devotional hymns of the Tamil saints, from the sixth to the tenth century in South India. Thus even though Varuna passed very early out of the stage, all that was essential in him passed into the great God-Rudra-Siva.

Indra.

Towards the end of the Rigveda Indra has become the greatest of the vedic gods. He attained this position by means of an evolutive process, which was in fact conditioned by the climatic changes.[47] For long Indra was considered to be the god of storm, the deity who yields rain and dew. He is the Jupiter pluvius of early Indian mythology. Indra was invoked daily for his protection. One among the initial hymns of the Rigveda so reads: "As a good cow to him who milks, we call the doer of fair deeds, to our assistance day by day (RV. 1. 5. 1). He is closely associated with Soma, who is an earthly god. A votary thus prays, "O, Soma drinker, thunder-armed, friend of our lovely featured dames, and of our Soma drinking friends...(RV. 1. 30. 11). Indra is the lord of strength (1. 29. 2), a friend of Agni in drinking the soma juice (I. 21. 1, 3). No praise is strong enough to describe adequately the qualities of Indra. It is he who with his might has set apart earth and sky (x. 89. 1). In order to obtain soma from his father Tvastr or Dyaus he seized his father by foot and slew him (iv. 18. 12; 3. 48. 4). He came to be considered as the supreme Lord from whom all the gods took their origin. "Indra is sovereign Lord of Earth and Heaven, Indra is Lord of waters and of mountains. Indra is Lord of the prosperous and sages, Indra must be invoked in rest and effort" (x. 89. 10). But he is mainly known as the national war god of the Aryans.[48] A large number of myths

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47. Indra is perhaps the most popular of all vedic gods. No fewer than two hundred and fifty hymns are addressed to him in the Rig veda alone, as against ten to Varuna, and thirty-five to Mitra, Varuna and Aditya together.

48. As the Aryan invaders advanced farther into India, the atmospheric changes affected them deeply. The storms and the sun were more

surrounding Indra is in relation to the warfare of this god. He is in charge of establishing order in the world. The basic form of his saving attitude is represented by his successful encounter with the demon Vrtra,[49] and his releasing of the imprisoned cows, waters, or light. As he liberated rain, with the defeat of the cloud-demon by his thunder bolt, he is known as rain God.[50] Of the other gods Indra is closely connected with his troop

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terrific, and the display of divine power became more and more concentrated in the rage of the elements. Sun has become a deadly power as well as one beneficient. Seeing the rain falling after a long draught, they thought it to be a miracle accomplished by a God who is both fierce and benevolent in the sense that he liberated water imprisond by some enemy, for their benefit. The theme of the liberation of the waters, evidently naturalistic in origin, is often confused with other mythical themes, the conquest of light, of the Sun, of the divine waters, conferring Indra the title of a great warrior God (Cf. Monier Williams, *Hinduism*, London, 1894, p. 23ff.; A. B. Keith, *Religion and......opus cit,*, p. 129; Louis Renou, *Vedic India*, p. 63).

49. Even the etymological signification of the word Vrtra reveals the evil character of the great foe. It comes from the root *Vr* which means, "to cover, to conceal, to obstruct, to hide etc". (cf. Monier Williams, *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1960, p. 1007; A.A. Macdonell, *A practical* Sanskrit Dict., Oxford, 1965, p. 294). Hence Vrtra can be a personification of concealment or covering. To Oldenberg Vrtra signifies enemy, the one who blocks the route of the invaders (H. Oldenberg, *La Religion Du Veda*, Paris, 1903, p. 112). Vrtra is generally represented as the enemy who prevented the rain from falling on the earth (RV. ii. 14. 2; 1. 52. 6). The great scholars give different opinions regarding Vrtra. To Max Müller he is a demon of darkness, who hides or covers light or rain (cf. Max Müller, *Chips from a German* Workshop, Vol. iv., London, 1894-1895, pp. 249, 253; Referring to RV. 1. 57. 6 Macdonell points out that Vrtra is one of the individual demons (A.A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Strassburg, 1897, p. 158); According to Muir, he represents the hostile powers in the atmosphere who malevolently shut up the watery treasures in the clouds (J. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, London, 1898, vol. v. p. 95).

50. Etymologically the word Indra means "highest, chief prince of" (Cf. A.A. Macdonell, A *Practical*...opus cit., p. 45). E.D. Perry brings out the explanations regarding the etymology and original meaning given by different scholoars: Max Müller and Muir consider Indra to be Jupiter; To Grassman, he is the God of the bright vault of heaven (Cf. E. D. Perry, *Indra in the Rig Veda*, an art. in JAOS. 11 (1892), p. 20.

Maruts,[51] with Agni (Fire) whom he generates and finds in the waters, and to whom he is akin in nature.[52] And with Surya he is here and there identified, "Surya is he: throughout the wide expanses shall Indra turn him, swift as car wheels hither, like a stream resting not but ever active: he has destroyed with light, the black-hued darkness" (RV. x. 89. 2).[53] We have already seen that Indra was in conflict with the great assura god Varuna. There are some who think that the latent tension that exists between them symbolises the tension between the Brahman priest and Kshatriya warriors in their social relations.[54] Indra also is a binding god as Varuna. He too uses the magic power of imprisonment against his enemies.[55] It is said of Indra that he brought a "bond" for Vrtra (RV. ii. 30. 2), and bound him without cords (ii. 13. 9).[56]

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51. Marut signifies, "relating to or belonging to Maruts or storm gods; God or wind; vital air, etc" (cf. A. A. Macdonell, p. 226). Though Maruts are born of Rudra, (RV. x. 81. 1), they are always seen associated with Indra who is mainly known as the principal storm God. Maruts, under the leadership of Indra fight against Vrtra, using the same weapon as Indra. They are also called Rudras (v. 87. 7), who are otherwise known as great "confidents of Vishnu" (v. 87. 8), Maruts are generaliy invoked in plural, but sometimes we see only one God (vi. 66. 11.) (Cf. Mircea Eliade, patterns... opus cit., p. 87; Oldenberg, opus cit., p. 116; L. Renou, *Vedic India*, p. 63).
52. Many are the hymns devoted to the praise of Agni and Indra in common. They are considered to be twins...born of the same parents, "Heaven and Earth". Impetuous is their strength, and keen the lighting of the mighty pair...two gods are partners...(RV. v. 86. 3-5).
53. Indra, though sometimes appear as Agni, Vishnu, or Rudra, is considered as the sole object of adoration (H.H. Wilson, *Rig Veda Sanhita*, vol. iii., Poona, 1926, pp. v, vi).
54. Cf. R.C. Zaehner, *opus cit.*, pp. 24.
55. Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, trans. by philip Mairet, New York, 1961, p. 99; H. Oldenberg, *opus cit.*, p. 137.
56. The slaying of Vrtra is not merely attributed to Indra: by the syncretism, which is a very general phenomenon in the Veda, it is also attributed to Agni, and Soma. The gods as a whole are supposed to aid Indra in the contest, but at the roaring of the demon (Vrtra), they all fled, leaving the Maruts only to aid him. (Cf. A.B. Keith, *opus cit.*, p. 127; H. Oldenberg., p. 116).

Indra and Trimûrti.

What relation Indra has got with the Divine Triad? In Zaehner's view Indra prefigures Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu, as his beginnings are humble and his character is recognisably human.[57] Indra's childhood is beset with difficulties.

Once born[58] he was wanted by none, but feared by all; his mother attempts to hide him and leaves him to his own devices, "like an unlicked calf" (RV. iv. 18. 10). Indra is a hero till the end, like Krishna of Mahabhãrata, a man-god, not just a man, nor just a God. He who kills the demon with his immeasurable might is like Vishnu who also is named as a demon slayer.[59] By destroying the demon Vrtra he acts like Krishna, who came to destroy the wicked and to establish order in the world.

We find that Indra is in a way related to Rudra too, who became the later Siva. This is specially in connection with his generative activity. Indra is constantly compared to a bull. Rudra, the pre-Aryan deity also is addressed as a bull-god (RV. ii. 33. 3, 6, 8). In another hymn Rudra, the father of Maruts (ii. 33. I) generated them so: "The bull Rudra created them in the bright breast of prsni" (RV. ii. 34. 2). But we see also that as a bull, Indra united himself to a cow goddess of cosmic proportions. Prsni was one of her names, Sabardugha another; but she remains always a cow procreating all things.[60]

Yet in the Rig Veda itself we see Indra the great god showing the signs of decline, giving way to the development of the sectarian deities, as Vishnu and others, whom he prefigured. It was the beginning of philosophical thinking. They dared even to question his very existence. "Where is he?", they asked; "He is not", was the reply. "He sweeps away like birds, the foe's possessions" (RV. ii. 12. 5).

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57. R.C. Zaehner, *opus cit.*, p. 25.

58. The birth of Indra is mysterious, like that of many other ancient gods. He came out through his mother's side (RV. iv. 18. 1. 2).

59. Cf. J. Gonda, art. cit., in *The Supreme Reality in Non Christian* Religions, p. 123.

60 Cf. Mircea Eliade, *patterns in*...p. 86.

TERRESTRIAL GODS

Agni (The Fire God)

Agni means fire.[61] Agni is the second great God of the vedic worshippers and the most important in connection with sacrificial rites.[62] More than two hundred hymns are found in the Rig Veda in honour of Agni.[63] It is in Agni that the divine and human worlds most nearly coalesce, for Agni is the God who, as fire, consumes the sacrifice and, as priest, presents it to the gods above. So he is the mediator or rather a messenger between gods and men.[64] This god is born in heaven, in the atmosphere and on the earth. He is considered as the "child of Heaven" (RV. vi. 8. 2; 1. 143. 2); he is again stated to have been born in the highest heaven (RV. vi. 49. 27); he is also identified with the light of heaven (RV. x. 88. 6; viii. 44. 29 etc). Agni is old and still always again young; he is ageless, immortal, unsurmountable, in the possession of all strength, and an untiring conqueror.[65]

Agni is god of all men (RV. v. 24. 4), and at the same time he acts as the priest (RV. v. 25. 2). Agni can be seen from two points: one in which he is found as the great God, powerful, who surpasses everything in greatness (RV. viii. 91. 9), and the other in which he is seen as the friend and kinsman of all. He is both god and minister (RV. v. 22. 2). Agni, though exalted both in Heaven and on Earth (vii. 7. 5), is generally considered as their child (RV. x. 1. 2). He is the Supreme Lord above all gods (RV. viii. 91. 17). Yet he is their common "infant" (RV. vi. 7. 4). The Union of these two opposing qualities, greatness and smallness, old age and childhood, might and humility into the person of the Fire God has influenced a lot in the later

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61. The word is related to the Latin Ignis. It could not have provided the name of a God except by adding to the images of fire, those of the officiating priest and the metaphorical apparatus of the sacrifice, (Cf. L. Renou, *Vedic India*, p. 69).
62. Cf. A.B. Keith, *The Mythology of the races*, p. 38.
63. The vedic sages could easily discern a powerful deity behind this natural phenomena of fire (Cf. Zacharias O.C.D., *opus cit.*, p. 18).
64. RV. iv. 1. 1; x. 91. 18; Cf. also Zaehner, *opus cit.*, p. 19 and P. Masson-Oursel in *Histoire des Religions*, by Maxime Gorce and Raoul Mortier, Paris, 1947, vol. iii, p. 7.
65. Cf. J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, Stuttgart, 1960, vol. 1, p. 67.

development of Hindu thought. Born in heaven he descends to earth. He is born again on the earth as the mouth of the gods. For it is he who devours the oblation made by men; or as priest he brings down the gods, as God takes the sacrifice to gods.[66] He is the immortal who delights in all oblations brought by mortal men (RV. v. 18. 1). Agni is the repeller of all evil (SB. 7. 3. 2ff). These benevolent qualities of Agni in favour of men give human life, according to Oldenberg, a centre of great social and religious importance.[67]

The Birth of the Fire God.

We find quite a number of parents in the vedas who generated Agni. His mythical parents are Dyaus and Prithvi (Heaven and Earth), or Tvastr. and the waters (RV. x. 2. 7.). But he is also a child of all the gods whose father however he is (RV. vi. 7. 4.). In the Aitareya Brahmana (viii. 28) we find that the Sun on setting enters into Agni, while in Rig Veda we see Agni uniting himself with the rays of the Sun (v. 37. 1; vii. 2. 1).[68]

More important is his birth from two fire sticks, the upper one being male and the lower one considered as the female (RV. 1. 127. 4; vii. 1. 1.). Agni is latent in the sticks. When they are stricken the fire comes out. As force is needed for his production, Agni is the son of Strength. He is born for ever (RV. iv. 2. 2). Not only men are engaged in kindling the fire, but also gods and priests (RV. v. 25. 2).

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66. In the hymn (iv. 2. 5), Agni is presented as an Asura priest who is essentially a demon. But we see again, "Agni, the Asura shall set as Herald, calling Gods hither for our great good fortune (vii. 30. 3); Mircea Eliade, *Patterns...opus cit.,* p. 417.

67. Cf. J. Gonda, *Some Observations on the relations between "Gods" and "powers" in the Veda a propos of the phrase Sunuh, Sahasah,* quoted from Religion des Veda by H. Oldenberg, S—Gravenhage, 1957, p. 39.

68. In one hymn we see Agni named as Surya (iv. 1. 17). But Keith does not share in the view that Sun is a manifestation of Agni. He considers Sun to be too great and prominent a deity to be treated merely as a form of Agni (Cf. A.B. Keith, *Religion...opus cit.,* p. 156.

Agni in domestic Ritual

Though Agni is greater than heaven and earth and all the worlds, he is also a humble house holder—he is the household fire which even today is the centre of the domestic ritual, or again he is a guest in the houses of men.[69]

This domestic side of the worship is constantly referred, and he is described as father, brother, son or even as mother. He has the epithet domestic, and is styled Lord of the house (RV. vii. 15. 7.). So Agni is called the immortal who abides among mortals in the human habitations. He reveals his great importance in connection with certain sacrifices, assuming a triple form. According to certain authors, the use of three fires distinct from the ordinary fire, in the sacrifice began even before the times of Rig Veda.[70]

Position of Agni in the progressive Development of the Triadic Concept of God.

From what has been said above it is clear how important was the role played by Agni with regard to the evolution of the Triadic concept of God in later Hinduism. He was at the same time a symbol of unity and multiplicity. Indra has rendered great service to the vedic Aryans by letting down torrents of rain that was necessary for their agricultural and pastoral life. But, what could rain effect without the aid of heat? They found this force, the intensity of which must have impressed them with awe. "Hence the second great God of vedic worshippers and the most important in connection with sacrificial rites, is Agni, (Ignis), "the God of fire".[71] As he embodied in himself all the three regions of the universe by his triple birth, he was referring to the idea of one God, which became prominent in the later Vedic

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69. RV. v. 18. 1; "He is the meeting place of gods and men and the bond of union between them pervading everything in heaven and atmosphere and earth as Sun, lightning and fire, he is none the less the "navel of the earth" (RV. 1. 59. 2.), the sacral "centre" of the family, the tribe, and ultimately of the whole universe" (Cf. R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism* p. 20).
70. Cf. A.B. Keith, *Religion and...opus cit.*, p. 287.
71. Cf. Monier Williams, *Hinduism*, opus cit., p. 23.

period. All the gods together worship Agni, who is the supreme One. "Three times a hundred gods and thrice a thousand, and three times ten and nine have worshipped Agni" (RV. iii. 9. 9). Again the development of the sectarian gods as the manifestation of the Supreme Brahman, of which we shall speak in the coming chapters, is symbolically foreshadowed in the case of the God Agni. For we see not only one Agni, or one fire-God, but many Agnis; one fire is made by many other fires. That one fire can be called the Supreme One. We see "by Agni, Agni is kindled", or "by fire, fire is kindled" (RV. 1. 12. 6), or "with all Agni (i.e. with all thy fires), O Agni, accept this sacrifice at this prayer, O young (son) of strength" (1. 12. 10). His triple birth, the three fires etc. point to the future triad of gods in the post vedic age.[72]

Rudra

The worship of Siva, known earlier as Rudra, goes back to the Vedas. The great sectarian deity of the late Hinduism began to show his appearence from the pre Aryan period. This is clear from the portrayal of a deity that appears on a roughly carved seal found during the excavations in Mohanjodaro.[73] In the

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72. From the relations of Agni with Indra and Surya, Monier Williams deduces easily the triadic concept of gods, "Fire on earth, Sun in the sky, lightning in the clouds; these three, Indra, Agni, Surya constitute the vedic triad of Gods" Monier Williams, *Hinduism*, p. 23.

73. A three-faced personage is seated on a low platform, with his legs bent double beneath him, and feet placed heel to heel with toes turned down. His extended arms are encased in bangles, and more ornaments cover his chest. His head is crowned with a tall head dress from which long horns project. At his right hand are an elephant and a tiger, at his left a rhinoceros and buffalo, and beneath the throne are two deer. At the top of the seal is an inscription of seven characters. The personage represented in this seal can be plausibly identified as the prototype of Siva. His three faces accord with the representation of Siva as often having three, four or five faces, and usually three eyes supposed to denote insight into the past, present and future. His posture is that of a Yogi, and Siva is regarded as the typical ascetic and prince of all Yogis. He is accompanied by wild animals, and Siva is called the Lord of beasts. His horned head-dress is compared to the trisul or trident later used as royal insignia, a religious symbol in early Buddhistic sculpture, and often specially associated in Hinduism with Siva (Cf. Jack Finegan, *opus cit.*, p. 127; M. Dhavamony, in *Religious Hinduism*, by Jesuit Scholars, Allahabad, 1964, pp. 251-2).

Rigveda he is not very prominent. Still he is a god of marked individuality, of varied but highly coloured appearence, and with a varied armament in which the bow and arrows are already predominent.[74].

The God of death according to the early popular mythology was not Yama, but, Rudra, the red one. He was also the God of wild communities living on mountains and forests, who were generally given to uncivil activities.[75] He is rarely associated with other gods except the Maruts, whose father he is (RV. ii. 33. 1; vii. 35. 6).

The original nature of Rudra is far from clear. The name Rudra is Aryan, while Dravidians called the Deity by the name Siva.[76] The god is generally considered as a god of thunder storm.[77] Even the gods fear that he may destroy them, for there is no one stronger than him. His anger can never be appeased, and the best that can be hoped for is that his shafts will be directed elsewhere, preferably against one's enemies. Total dependence upon this God is expressed in the hymn RV. ii. 33. 4. If in the Rig Veda Rudra is terrible, "splitting like a wild beast" (ii.33.11), in the later vedas and the Brahmanas he is far more so.

The mild and auspicious character of Siva in the later period is not altogether missing in the Rudra of the Vedic times.[78] "To him are offered up oblations-invocations: Him would I ap-

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74. Cf. Louis Renou, *Vedic India,* p. 63.
75. Cf. R.N. Dandekar, *opus cit.,* p. 229; Identification of Rudra with the cult of the dead is not unanimously accepted by the scholars. Keith does not admit any relation between Rudra and the dead, neither in worship, nor in sacrifice. Rudra's place is the North, and not the south, which is essentially that of the dead. Even though he admits of certain analogies between the ritual of the dead and that of Rudra, he concludes that it is because both the dead and Rudra have terrible characteristics (Cf. A.B. Keith, *Religion...opus cit.,* p. 147).
76. The origin of the name Rudra remains obscure. It is said that when he was born, he wept. Prajâpati, his father, asked the child the reason of his weeping. He was told that he wept, since he had no name. Then prajâpati called the child Rudra (from the root "rud", "to weep" (SB. vi. 1. 3. 8-10). There are some other symbolic etymologies too. Rudra means "the howler" (Brhad-Devata, 2. 34); "remover of pain", "roaring", "terrific", "red one", etc.
77. Cf. H. Oldenberg, *Religion des...opus cit.,* p. 181.
78. Cf. J. Gonda, *Die Religionen...opus cit.,* vol. 1. p. 86.

pease, Rudra, with songs of praise; Compassionate is he, easy to invoke; tawny (his body), lovely his lips: may he not deliver us up to his fearful wrath (RV. ii. 33. 5). This may be the result of an attempt made by the vedic poets, in order to admit Rudra, who was the god of wild, in the groups of the gods. He is considered as furious and mild, as one who curses and blesses. The poet says: "I bend to thee, as thou approaches, Rudra, even as a boy before the sire who greets him (RV. ii. 33. 12). He is the God who sends sickness, still he is the best and most famous doctor, who cures with a thousand remedies, that are at his disposal (ii. 33. 2). He takes away the ailments sent by other gods too (ii. 33. 7). In Rudra the opposites meet but are not reconciled; this is one of the reasons that this terror inspiring God could develop to his full stature as Rudra-Siva.[79]

Regarding sacrifice, Rudra is in a position different from that of other gods. The aim of the worshipper is to satiate Rudra and to avert his dangerous presence: for he is really a man-killer (RV. iv. 3. 6).

The name Siva is not found in the Rig veda as the name of a God. It is with contact with the Aryan civilization that the pre Aryan Siva became Rudra in the vedas.

Vishnu

Along with Siva, Vishnu also became one of the great gods of the late Hinduism. "More peaceful than Siva, less awe inspiring and transcendent, essentially propitious, more anthropomorphic even in his non-incarnate aspects, vishnu inspires loving adoration."[80]

The name can be differently explained according to its etymological origin. *Vi,* the root of Vishnu signifies "a bird".[81] Here it is interesting to note that in several primitive religions, a bird is the symbol of fertility and productivity.[82] Another

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79. In the great epics *Mahabhârata* and Ramayana, eventhough Siva appears to have reached a prominent position, he still continues to represent the old Rudra form (Cf. A. P. Parmarker, *Cultural Heritage of India, opus cit.,* vol. ii. p. 86).
80. P. Fallon, in *Religious Hinduism,* opus cit., p. 86.
81. A.A. Macdonell, *opus cit.,* p. 279.
82. Vishnu is a god of fertility and productivity, a god intrinsically connected with the life of the agricultural and pastoral communi-

explanation is that the name is derived from the root (*vis*, "the active one" or from *vi* and *snu* meaning" crossing the back of the world" or the earthly regions.[83]

Vishnu's main action is the taking of three strides or steps, by which he covered the earth, atmosphere and the sky or beyond it......, "For (this) his manly power, is Vishnu praised.

> Like a dread beast he wanders where he will,
> Haunting the mountains: in his three wide paces
> All worlds and beings (bhuvans) dwell" (RV. 1.154.2).

His three-fold striding is explained in different ways. It may be taken as the three-fold manifestations of light in the form of fire (on earth), lightning (in atmosphere), and Sun (in heaven). To Oldenberg, the strides signify mainly, the marching of the day, with three chief points, morning, midday and evening. In the marching of the God Vishnu, he sees the Sun in his daily appearance on the earth. The triple division of the universe into Heaven, space and earth also is alluded to.[84] According to Zaehner, Vishnu with his miraculous steps, measures out the earth and supports the heavens.[85] It is said that the third step is of a special nature and very sublime, since it is beyond the ken of birds. Thus Vishnu became the greatest in all the three regions.

What are these strides of Vishnu? This is narrated in the Brahmanas. This refers to a myth, that, having lost their supremacy over the Asuras, the gods agree with them upon a division of the world whereby they will take as much as Vishnu who was a dwarf could cover in three steps. The Asuras seeing the dwarf nature of Vishnu agreed. But Vishnu, then in three steps occupied the whole universe thus defeating the enemies of gods (SB. 1.2.5.1,ff.). The later vedic scriptures elaborate the myth of the strides of the dwarf Vishnu.

It must be admitted that Vishnu was not an insignificant deity, eventhough he was not adequately presented in the vedic

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ties. Dandekar, "*Vishnu in the Veda*", in Kane commemorative volume, (1941), pp. 95-111.

83. Cf. A. B. Keith, *Religion......opus cit.*, p. 109.
84. H. Oldenberg, *opus cit.*, p. 191.
85. R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, p. 34.

hymns. There can really be little doubt as to the solar nature of Vishnu.[86]

Conclusion

This chapter helps as an introduction and a suitable background for a better understanding of our theme namely, Trimûrti. Eventhough Trimûrti as such did not have any foundation in the early stages of the Hindu religion, we find that this idea was not developed without due preparation. From the very beginning it seems that the Aryans had a special attraction to the number three. The basis of this might have been the simple observance of the natural phenomena, in the beginning. They could easily divide the entire cosmos into three compartments—the Earth, atmosphere and sky. In their imagination they invented gods also as protectors of these different regions. Who was the chief among these gods? It seems that it was not an important problem to the Indo-Aryans. We saw Surya, Varuna, Indra and Agni—each one enjoying superiority over the others, on different occasions. Eventhough the gods were of three regions the men under their protection live only on earth. It was the man of this lower region who invented the gods of other regions too. For whom? To no one other than himself. So in accordance with his needs, and desires, he considered the one or the other as the great God. In this early period, if the division was according to the regions, later when we reach the idea of Trimûrti developed, we will see the division based mainly on functions—of creation, preservation and destruction. Then also the classification will appear to be inexact. One God may be seen doing the functions of all the others. Still to arrive at the perfect idea of Trimûrti we have to go a long way.

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86. This Vishnu in India became in time as independent a deity as Apollon and Dionysos ever were in Greece, but they were all conceived as in the beginning sons of Heaven and earth, and as closely allied with the Sun in its various manifestations. Cf. J. Gonda. *Some Observations......opus cit.,* p. 44.

CHAPTER II

Brahman, The Absolute and Supreme God and Brahma, The First Member of Trimurti

(A) *Brahman, the Absolute and Supreme God.*

The idea of a supreme power behind everything, even behind the activities of the powerful gods, was not unknown to the vedic age. The Rig vedic poet expressed this view when he uttered that the reality is truly only one, even though the priest and poets explain it in different ways (RV. 1. 164. 46). Sometimes the Reality had been considered as the overseer in the highest heavens. Nobody is certain whence it originated, but the poet is sure that the gods came into being as a result of its emanation. This tendency seems to be pointing towards a monotheistic view, which, however, we have to study deeply. A remote preparation leading towards the future philosophical development of the upanishads was on the process; it is true that they did not know how to express it in appropriate terms, for no one apprehended it fully. This Absolute Reality is considered as the supreme soul of the universe, self-existent, all pervading and eternal and denoted as Brahman, in difference to Brahmã.[1] Among all the varied formulations of the first and supreme principle none recurs more constantly throughout the later texts than this word Brahman.

The Two Aspects of Brahman.

The upanishads describe Brahman as having two aspects: the one devoid of any qualifying characteristics (Nirviseshã) and the other endowed with qualities (Saviseshã). The former is further known as Nirguna (as having no quality), Anirvachaniya, apãra, etc., while the later is termed Saguna, determinate and so

1. Cf. *History of Hindu Triad,* opus cit., p. 15.

on. As the Apãra Brahman is conceived to be devoid of any characteristic sign, it is completely incomprehensible.[2]

The Upanishads tend to designate Brahman with attributes by the masculine 'He', and the attributeless Brahman by the neuter 'It'.[3]

The later development of the upanishadic period regarding the one God Brahman was actually due to the attempt to unify the various vedic gods, on whom Vedic men used to depend.[4] In their attempt to find out the basic unifying principle, the vedic poets first formulated various personalities as Prajãpati (Lord of people) Visvakarman (the All Maker), and Purusa (Male person) (RV. x. 121, 81, 90). It is first in the Satapatha Brahmana (Brahmana of hundred steps) that we find the neuter Brahman exalted to the position of the Supreme principle, which is the moving force behind the gods. 'The thirty three gods', we read in the S. Brahmana, 'have Brhaspati as purohitã (priest), but Brhaspati is Brahman, therefore the meaning is they have Brahman as purohitã (SB. xii. 8. 3. 29). Brahman is identified at one time with the wind, another with prãnas, and at another with the Sun.[5] To the question who this Brahman is, we find the following answer in the Maitiri upanishad: Brahman is 'fire, air, Sun, whatever it is time, breath, food, Brahmã, Rudra, Vishnu; some meditate upon one, some upon another...'.[6] These are but the chief forms of the Supreme, the immortal, the bodiless Brahman. To whichever one each man is devoted here, in this world he rejoices. For it has been said, "verily this world is Brahman."[7]

But we still see that in this process of unification of the powers of different gods, they considered this Reality to be one

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2. There are two forms of Brahman, the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal, the unmoving and the moving, the actual (existent) and the true (being) (Br. Up. ii. 3. 1); Cf. also Dr. Chandradhar Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian pihlosophy* Delhi, 2 ed. 1964, p. 27.
3. Cf. Swami Nikhilananda, The *Upanishads*, vol. 1. London, 1957. p. 27.
4. Cf. Geoffrey parrinder, *The Christian Debate, Light From the East,* London, 1964, p. 54.
5. Cf. H. Hillebrandt, in ERE, ed. by James Hastings, vol. iii, p. 799.
6. Mai Up. iv. 5.
7. Mai Up. iv. 6.

possessing all powers. Since it was difficult to ascribe and limit the particular domain of each god, they concluded that the One revealed himself in many forms. The giant strides which the thinkers made to reach the idea of the One God is better summarised in one of the upanishads, where we are told that there were at first more than three thousand and three hundred gods, and that they were reduced to thirty three, to six, to three, to two, to one and half, and at last to one, which one is the breath of life and his name is That.[8]

The Meaning of the Word Brahman

The word Brahman has assumed different significations before it arrived at the final point. The philosophical system of the Vedanta adopts as its aim the search after Brahman, and makes this the central point of its teaching. The loftier conception of Brahman speculation is there set forth, and is then handed down to generation. According to A.H. Hillebrandt, for the religion and philosophical history of India, the word Brahman possesses at least an equal significance with that of the term logos, (the Word) for Christianity.[9] According to the same author, it is difficult to grasp the original meaning of the word, for as early as the Rig veda it appears endowed with various meanings, and cannot be identified precisely with any of our conceptions.

The origins and etymology of the word are much disputed. Some say it is from a root *brith,* meaning to grow or increase, and was used of sounds like the roar of an elephant; to others it might be from the root *brh,* meaning 'to speak', or still better from its significations, 'to grow'. The last of these etymological significations, namely growth or persuasiveness is the most accepted one.[10] In the hymns of Rigveda, Brahman had been used as a sacred word, hymn or prayer addressed to gods. Later it began to be used as a magical power which was considered to be inherent in the prayers or sacrifices.[11]

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8. Br. Up. iii. 9. 1.
9. Cf. A. H. Hillebrandt, opus cit., p. 796.
10. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Upanishads, Gita and Bible,* 1952, p. 20; C. B. papali, *Hinduismus, vol.* 1, p. 26.
11. The efficiency of sacrifices was due not to any divine institution or benevolence of God, but to its inherent magical power; their

Sayana interprets Brahman as meaning (a) food, food offering; (b) the chant of the Soma singer; (c) magical formula or text, mantra; (d) duly completed ceremonies; (e) the chant and sacrificial gift together; (f) the recitation of the Hotr priest; (g) great.[12] The following explanation seems to be more correct, Franklin Edgerton says: the oldest meaning of this word seems to be "holy knowledge", or (what to primitive man is the same thing) its expression, 'hymn' or 'incantation'. It is applied both to the ritual hymns of the Rig Veda and to the magic charms of the Atharva Veda. Any holy mystic utterance is Brahman. This is the regular, if not the exclusive, meaning which the word has in the Rig Veda.[13]

The all pervasive Brahman

Brahman is discussed in various ways in the upanishads and some of these show the influence of magical ideas. We have seen that many gods were reduced to one. Sometimes speech is Brahman,[14] the eye is Brahman,[15] breath is Brahman,[16] and so ear,[17] mind[18] and heart.[19] These speculations appear to be materialistic and especially so, when Brahman is identified even with food, water, ether, etc.

All these show the pervasiveness of Brahman through all life. There is nothing outside of Brahman, the Absolute, nor can anything be conceived to be so. Brahman is identified with space. It is the space outside of a man, and this is the same as space within a man.[20] The real is the supra-cosmic, eternal, spaceless, timeless Brahman, who supports this cosmic manifestation in space and time. He is the universe; spirit, Paramãtman,

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efforts followed mechanically, either for good end or for bad end. Cf. Dasgupta, opus cit., vol. 1, pp. 21-22.

12. Sayana, quoted in ERE, vol. ii, p. 797.
13. Franklin Edgerton, *The Beginnings of Indian Philosophy*, London, 1965. p. 23.
14. Br. Up. iv. 1. 2.
15. Br. Up. iv. 1. 4.
16. Br. Up. iv. 1. 3.
17. Br. Up. iv. 1. 6.
18. Br. Up. iv. 1. 6.
19. Br. Up. iv. 1. 7. Cf. also Tat. Up. III. 1. 1.
20. Chand. Up. iii. 12. 7-8.

who ensouls the cosmic forms and movements...[21] The supreme is like salt melted in water. Salt as such is invisible, but is present in every tiny drop of water.[22]

The Nature of this supreme Spirit.

The Hindu poet never doubted the reality of the one Supreme Universal Spirit, however much the descriptions of it may fall short of its nature. For him the God hides himself, affirming that silence is more significant than speech regarding the depths of the Divine. Prof. MaxMüller quotes a well known passage from one of the upanishads, stating that Brahman is silence: The disciple Vashkali said: 'Sir, tell me Brahman'. Then the sage Bhava became quite still. When Vashkali had asked a second time, Bhava replied: "We are telling it but thou does not understand, that Self in quite still."[23]

The notion of Brahman is almost the notion of God in the Vedantic system, except the fact that it (Brahman-neuter) is devoid of any personality. It is a principle, a reality, something supreme, but it is not a personal God. Yet it must be admitted that the transcendental unity of God is expressed here. Brahman can be said to be the 'universale or transcendentale in concreto."[24] It is as a result of the opposition to the false type of anthropomorphism of the popular Hinduism that individuality and consequently personality is denied of Brahman.

Neti, Neti!

According to the Vedantic philosopher the best way of describing Brahman is by negative terms. They say Brahman is Neti, Neti, i.e., not this, not this. He is one who can be neither conceived nor perceived. It is impossible to comprehend what He is; we can only say what He is not. 'There the eye goes not, nor the mind; we know not, we understand not, how one can teach this.'[25] Here the author of the upanishads states that the

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21. Conf. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavat Gita*, London, 1967, p. 27.
22. Br. Up. ii. iv. 12.
23. F. Max Muller, *Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy*, London, 1894, p. 84.
24. C. B. Papali, Hinduismus, vol. 1, p. 127.
25. Ke. Up. 1. 3.

knowledge of a thing arises through the senses or the mind and since Brahman is not reached by either of these, we do not know of what nature it is. We are therefore unable to understand how any one can explain that Brahman to a disciple. Nevertheless 'it is the reality of the individual phenomenal activities."[26] The following famous negative description of Brahman is from the great sage Yajnavalkya who as a conclusion to his conversation with his wife Maitreyi states: That Self is to be described as not this, not this. He is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended. He is indestructible, for he cannot be destroyed. He is unattached, for he does not attach himself. He is unfettered, he does not suffer, he is not injured....[27] Brahman has been compared to a spider who sends forth and then draws back its thread. Everything proceeds from him, and He is their final destination.[28]

Existence of the sensible Objects

According to the Vedantic philosophy there does not exist anything but Brahman, the Supreme and Absolute. All that really exists is identified with Brahman or everything is God.[29] Then what is the explanation of the visible world with all the creatures both animate and inanimate?

The perfection of so abstract a God is no doubt inconceivable. He has to manifest himself if he is to be comprehended by others. In their attempt to explain the relation of God to the world the Vedantists, found that God expresses himself by means of Māyā.

What is Maya?

There has been much difference of opinion about the etymology and original meaning of the word māyā. It has been

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26. *Principal Upanishads*, Madras, 1968, p. 35.
27. Br. Up. iv. 5. 15. In the early upanishads, Atman (Self), is the principle of the individual consciousness and Brahman the supernatural ground of the cosmos. Soon the distinction diminishes and the two are identified. In the above passage Self and Brahman are seen to be indistinct.
28. Cf. Geoffrey Parrinder, Upanishads, Gita......p. 121, Mund. Up. 1. 1. 7.
29. Cf. Monier Williams: *Brahmanism and*.....p. 129 and Radhakrishnan, HVL. p. 50.

considered as the 'Power of illusion'[30] or 'trick of illusion',[31] asuravidya or magic.[32] It is regarded as the source of the visible universe, the illusion which would have us believe this world to be real, where as the only reality is the eternal and imperishable Brahman. It can be defined, as 'the incomprehensible insight, wisdom, judgement and power, enabling its possessor to create something or to do something, ascribed to mighty beings.[33] It is the creative activity of God. Māyā is referred here to a special ability of Brahman to create forms or rather to an inexplicable power of a High Being to assume forms, to project itself into externality, to assure an outward appearance, to appear in or as the phenomenal world. Everything we see existing is a manifestation or particularization of the one and sole divine essence.[34]

In Rig veda the term Māyā and its derivatives occur more than hundred times.

How this manifestation of Brahman is realised? Sankara[35]

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30. J. Gonda, *Four Studies in the language of the Veda,* S. Gravenhage, 1959, p. 119.
31. F. Edgerton, opus cit., p. 359. God keeps the unwise from knowing his true nature.
32. Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects,* Delhi, Varnasi, vol., ii, 1958, p. 155.
33. Cf. J. Gonda, *Four Studies*...opus cit., p. 126.
34. Maya is derived from the root, ma, to form, to build, and originally meant the capacity to produce forms. The creative power by which God fashions the universe is called yogamaya (Cf. *Bhagavat Gita,* by Radhakrishnan, pp. 40-41 and BG. vii. 25). Maya is also known as prakriti, and consists of three gunas: sattva, rajas and tamas (goodness, passion and darkness). The word gunas is generally translated as quality. Essentially the gunas are the very stuff of Maya. All that exists in the universe consists of these three gunas. Brahman or the great spirit after projecting the universe remains hidden in it, just as a seed, after producing a tree, remains hidden in the tree. This Brahman, by the action of Maya becomes personalised as creator, preserver and destroyer (with the personal representations Brahma, Vishnu and Siva). Cf. Swami Nikhilananda, *The Upanishads,* 2nd selection, London 1957, p. 73.
35. Sri Sankaracharya is the greatest of the philosophers of India. He was born in a Brahmin family, at Kalady, in the present state of Kerala, in S. India, most probably in the year 788 A.D. Sankara is greatly extolled on account of his Advaita philosophy. (Advaita signifies nonduality). This is known as Advaita Vedanta. Vedanta

attributes it to the action of mãyã on the Supreme, the cause of the entire world. This power or mãyã is neither a 'being' (sat), for being is only Brahman, nor a non-being (asat), for at any rate it produces the appearance of this world. Being associated with this principle of illusion, Brahman is enabled to project the appearances of animate and inanimate beings. Brahman acting by the power (sakti) of mãyã can be better called Iswara, the Lord.

Thus we see God the Supreme, takes the personal form to produce the material world. Mãyã is not the original cause. It only serves to make God manifest himself in the world. It creates the diversity of the grades of existence as higher and lower. When the multiplicity shuts us away from the reality of God, mãyã is called Avidya. When subject to it, individuals feel that they have a separate existence and thus become subject to bondage.[36]

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literally means the end of the vedas. The vedanta philosophy teaches the oneness of God, soul and the Universe. But the Vedanta as it is called at the present day, really comprises all the various sects that now exist in India....It practically forms the scriptures of the Hindus, and all systems of philosophy that are orthodox have to take it as their foundation...All the vedantists agree on three points. They believe in God, in the vedas as revealed, and in cycles. The belief about the cycles is as follows: All matter throughout the universe is the outcome of one primal matter called Akasha; and all force, whether gravitation, attraction or repulsion, or life is the outcome of one primal force called Prana. Prana acting on Akasha is creating or projecting the universe....plants, animals, men, stars and so on are made so... After an incalculable period of time, this evolution ceases and involution begins, every thing being resolved back through their finer and finer forms into the original Akasha and prana, (Prakriti and Purusha of the Samkhya Philosophical system), when a new cycle follows. Now there is something beyond Akasha and Prana—both can be resolved into a third called, Mahat—the Cosmic mind. The cosmic mind does not create Akasha and Prana, but changes itself into them. (Cf. Swami Vivekananda, *Vedanta Philosophy* (at the Harward Uni.), Calcutta, 1966, pp. 1-6).

36. Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma Sutra,* London, 1960, p. 91. Here we deem it proper to give a note on the explanation of S. Vivekananda, the grat Vedantic philosopher of modern times, regarding this manifestation of God. If there exists really only one Being (Sat), which converts itself into world, men etc., then the question arises, how the unchangeable (for that which is Absolute is uncangeable) can be changed into that which is changeable and perishable. The followers of Sankara say that the universe is the apparent

They theory of māyā, with its activity for the manifestation of the Supreme Brahman, is held by Sankara. But it must be noted that the different theistic systems adopted by the large majority of the Hindus do not advocate the doctrine of Māyā.[37]

Sacchidānanda (Sat-Chit-Ānanda)

Sankara points out that God is one undivided Reality, compact of knowledge and Bliss Absolute.[38] The best definition that can be conceived by human reason of this supreme God is Sacchidānanda (Existence, knowledge and bliss).

The term, however does not appear in any of the principal upanishads, though Brahman is often described in them by such separate terms as Reality, Consciousness and Bliss. The three attributes can be further described as Truth, goodness and beauty (Satyam, sivam, sundaram).[39] By knowing it the unseen becomes seen, the unknown becomes known, the unthought of becomes the thought of.[40]

Absolute remains in the philosophical World

We have been thinking of the Supreme and Absolute Brahman, all the way. What relation a common man has with this transcendental Being? The attributes given to Him (mostly negative) were incomprehensible to every one who was not a philosopher. The Supreme Being is unmanifest, unthinkable, unchanging, neither existent, nor non-existent etc. It became therefore necessary to conceive God in a personal way. God though

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evolution of God. God is the material cause of this universe, but not really, only apparently. The celebrated illustration used is that of the rope and the snake, where the rope appeared to be the snake, but was not really so. The rope did not really change into the snake. The Being is not really changed and all the changes we see in it are only apparent....When one sees God, the universe vanishes entirely Cf. S. Vivekananda, *Vedanta phi.* opus cit., pp. 9-10).

37. Cf. Radhakrishnan, HVL, p. 45.
38. Cf. Swami Tattwananda, *The Quintescence of Vedants,* Kalady, 1960, p. xxx. T
39. In the Taittiriya Up. we find the attributes, Satyam, Jnanam, Anandam (Truth, knowledge and bliss), Taitt. Up. ii. 1. 1.
40. Cf. also Chandradhar Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy,* London, 1960, p. 26.

a transcendental reality ought to have been present before man's eyes. For, Nirguna Brahman as an abstract principle could not be worshipped, prayed to or meditated upon. But being the immortal essence of every man, it compels us to show respect to all, inspite of their illusory masks. Thus though it cannot be an object of formal devotion, it gives reality to the gods, being their inner substance, and thus binds together all worshippers in the common quest for truth.[41]

Saguna Brahman or Brahman in the form of a personal God, who is immanent in the universe and conditioned by māyā, has

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41. It is to be noted that not all the philosophers of India were strict adherents of this advaita siddhanta of Sankara. *Ramanuja,* the great Vaishnavaite philosopher of the eleventh century, also like Sankara, called himself a Vedantin, but he differed radically from the views of Sankara. He called his system Visishtadvaita (qualified advaita, signifying non-duality in difference). He made the personal God supreme. While Brahman, souls and the world are all different and eternal, they are at the same time inseparable. Inseparability is not identity. Brahman is related to the two others as soul to the body. They are sustained by him and subject to his control. For Ramanuja the phenomenal world is real and Maya is God's mode of operation in it. While matter and souls exist for god's sake, He exists for himself. The three together form an organic whole, while Brahman is the inspiring principle of both the other two. So according to Ramanuja the world and the individual souls have a definite entity of their own, which is perfectly real, even though they are parts of, and therefore much inferior in rank to, the God Brahman, who is really Personal. The interpretation made by Ramanuja of the upanishads is called *Brahma—Parinâma vada;* which means, Brahman really transforms Himself as the world of matter and of souls, while Sankara interprets them in the sense of *Brahma—Vivarta—vada* (i.e. Brahman unreally appears, through ignorance as the world of matter and of souls (Cf. also Chandradhar Sharma, opus cit., p. 27.
Madhva is another great philosopher (13th cent.) who differed from both Sankara and Ramanuja. He called himself a dualist (dwaita). Madhva made a threefold distinction between God who alone is absolute and independent, human souls which are eternal, though subject to him, and matter. For him souls are of three types, (i) souls destined for liberation and loving communion with Vishnu, his consort Lakshmi and the wind god Vayu; (ii) souls expecting an endless series of rebirth; (iii) souls who are condemned and consequently expecting eternal punishment in hell. Vallabha, Nimbaraka and others proposed different doctrines.

His foundation in Nirguna Brahman.[42] Creation, preservation and destruction are the activities of the saguna Brahman, which infact can never touch the serene depths, of the attributeless Reality. In the Mait. Up. we read,: "These (Fire, air, sun, time, whatever it is, breath, food, Brahmâ, Rudra, Vishnu) are the chief forms of the Supreme, the immortal, the bodiless Brahman. To which ever one each man is devoted here, in His world he rejoices. For it has been said, "verily, the whole world is Brahman".[43]

OM

Om is the most sacred word of the vedas. This symbol is used for Brahman both personal and impersonal. In the epic Mahabhãrata, we read: "The deities and the rishis (sages), the snakes, and the Asuras seated around the Lord of all creatures, asked him, saying,—Let that which is highly beneficial for us to be declared!—Unto them that required about what is highly beneficial, the Holy One uttered only one word —OM—, which is Brahmã in one syllable...".[44] This syllable is verily the everlasting spirit.

This syllable, indeed is the highest end; knowing this very syllable, whatever any one desires will, indeed, be his.[45] According to Hindu Philosophy, the whole of this universe has *name* and *form* (nama-rupa) as the conditions of its manifestation. The form is its outer crust, of which the name or idea is the inner essence or kernel. The universe perceived by the five senses is the form, behind which stands the eternal kernel or the word.[46] The symbol of this eternal principle is Om, also written Aum.

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42. We have already seen that maya is conceived as Brahman's inscrutable power. It is in association with Maya that Brahman becomes the dynamic creator of the universe. Ramanuja describes maya as 'a screen that hides the true nature of the Lord'. Cf. S. Nikhilananda, opus cit., vol. 1, p. 40.
43. Mai. Up. iv. 6.
44. *Vyasa's Mahabhârata,* publ. by Pratapachandra Ray, Aswamedha parva, Calcutta, 1894, p. 67.
45. Ka. Up. i. 2. 16.
46. This eternal word behind every creation or manifestation is like the logos of St. John.

To Zaehner, Om signifies 'imperishable being'.[47] In the Brahmanas, it occurs more frequently as a response, to each Rig-Vedic verse uttered by the Hotr (priest) meaning 'yes', 'so be it', answering to the Christian 'Amen'.[48] Prof. MaxMüller also holds that this syllable stands for 'Amen', a syllable of permission. He quotes from Ch. Up. 'verily, this syllable is of assent, for whenever one assents to anything he says simply 'amen'.[49]

The letters A, U, M, are called the three quarters, or letters of OM. There is a fourth quarter also, denoted by the prolonged undifferentiated sound *M,* which comes at the end as the word is pronounced.[50]

The syllable OM is the symbol of the personal God or in his manifestation as Trimûrti—with the three functions of creation, preservation and destruction.[51]

(B) *THE SUPREME IN ITS PERSONAL MANIFESTATION —SAGUNA BRAHMAN*

Salutation to Brahmã

"Aum, May Mitra (the Sun) be propitious to us; may Varuna (be) propitious (to us)......Salutation to Brahmã. Salutation to Thee, O Vayu. Thou indeed, art the visible (perceptible) Brahman. Of thee, indeed, the perceptible Brahman, will I speak. I will speak the right, I will speak the true...".[52]

Brahmã is the first person of the Trimûrti. His origin, main operation, relation with the creatures, present state etc. are discussed in this second part. Brahmã, as the God of creation is not found in the Rig-Veda, but he appears in the Atharva-Veda and several of the Brahmanas. Brahmã, considered as the creator

47. R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu Scriptures,* London, 1968, p. 211 (note, no. 1).
48. S. Radhakrishnan, pri. Up. p. 615.
49. MaxMüller, *Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy,* London 1894, p. 115.
50. Man. Up. 12.
51. According to J. M. Mitchell, *A* denotes Vishnu, possessing the quality of goodness, *U* stands for Siva, having the quality of tamas, and *M* is for Brahmâ, with the rajas quality (Cf. J. M. Mitchell, *Hinduism Past and Present,* 1885, London, p. 136).
52. Tait. Up. i. 1. 1.

of all the worlds, and the first born of all beings, is a popular personification of the impersonal and abstract supreme spirit realised by way of a long evolutive process.[53]

Brahmā differs from the Absolute Brahman

Brahman and Brahmā are different grammatically too according to their gender. The former is neuter, and denotes the Supreme soul of the universe, self-existent, all pervading and eternal. While Brahmā is masculine and represents the supreme spirit manifested as the active creator of the universe. This creator of the universe, the great father, or paternal uncle is the mythical personification of Brahman the Absolute.[54]

The teaching of Brahmā, or the Lower Brahman was meant especially for those who were incapable of comprehending the higher knowledge of the abstract Reality. For such people a special doctrine of the universe was formed, in which it was told that Brahman appeared as the creator of the world, which was then informed, sustained, and whose continued working would be ensured by his universal and vitalizing presence. In this sense Brahman is immanent in the universe which has not any existence apart from him. The universe will ultimately be resolved or cease to be, returning into the source from which it came.[55]

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53. Cf. *Dizionario Encyclopaedico Italiano,* vol. ii, Roma, 1955, p. 456.
54. Cf. Pietro Tacchi Venturi (ed.), *Storia delle religoni,* vol. i, Torino 1949, p. 46.
55. This is otherwise called the cycle of Brahman. Individual subjects come into existence and die, but the universe continues to exist. It is Brahmâ, who is the eternal knowing subject, who sustains the universe. Yugas are said to be the ages of the world. They are four in number. In the first Yuga called 'Krta', whose duration is considered to be 4800 years of Gods (each year of gods being equal to 360 years of men), there is perfect and eternal righteousness. In the next three Yugas Viz., treta, dvapara and Kali consisting respectively of 3600, 2400 and 1200 years of gods dharma (righteousness) guadually decreases by one fourth, remaining to the extent of only one fourth in the Kali Yuga. These four yugas together make a Maha Yuga or a Manvantara and two thousand such mahayugas make a Kalpa. Kalpa is a day in the life of Brahmâ, the creator, another Kalpa, a night. A hundred years of Brahmâ constitutes his life. But even this duration of the life of Brahmâ does not succeed in exhausting time, for the gods are not eternal, and the cosmic creations and destinations succeed one after another ad infinitum. It makes the cycle of creation, destruc-

Brahman therefore becomes individualised endowed with properties and capacities, and an apparent or provisional reality is allowed to the universe and to the souls therein.

Brahmânda

According to the vedic seers the universe is the egg of Brahmâ (Brahmânda), Which means cosmic egg. The name is derived from the ovel shape of the universe. The Brahmânda may be compared to a single solar system. Each Brahmânda has as its own Lord or Controller, the Lord Iswara. This Lord Iswara (Iswara here stands for Saguna Brahman), has three aspects: as Brahmã he creates, as Vishnu he preserves, and as Siva he destroys. These three, form one Lord, or God, who is known by three different names according to his three functions. As Brahmândas are without number, so too are the Brahmâs, Vishnus and Sivas without number.[56] All these deities are under one supreme Lord, the Saguna Brahman. Thus there are innumerable Brahmandas in the creation, each with independent ruling Lord, and under Him, in each universe, many subsidiary deities. We read in the Mundaka Up. that Brahmã arose as the first among the gods, the maker of the universe, the protector of all world. He taught the knowledge of Brahman, the foundation of all knowledge, to Atharvan his eldest son (According to Sankara, Brahmã here is Hiranyagarbha, the world soul).[57]

Important personal Gods before Brahmã

We have already seen that Brahmã as the God of creation had no place in the early vedic texts. Instead, the god of creation was Prajãpati, who represented the Supreme Brahman

tion and recreation. When at the end of a cycle Brahmâ dies, the universe dies with him. Brahmâ goes to the most exalted realm, known as Brahmaloka, where the souls live absorbed in this personal God. This stage is also called the night of Brahmâ, which also lasts as long as the day, at the end of which he manifests himself again i.e., his day begins (Cf. also, S. Tapasyananda, The Doctrine of manifestation according to Gita, in the *Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. ii., opus cit., p. 167; Sir Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Poona, 1928, p. 25.

56. Cf. S. Nikhilananda, *The Upanishads*, vol. i, p. 72.
57. Mund. Up. i. 1. 1; pri. Up. p. 671.

in the personified form. We will see that many of the characteristics and functions proper to the creator God Brahmã have already been found in Prajãpati, who became the most important deity towards the end of the Rig Veda and later in Brahmanas.

PRAJÂPATI[58]

The name Prajãpati occurs chiefly in four hymns of the Rig veda. He is the bestower of progeny or offspring (RV. x. 85. 43), twice a bestower of cattle (x. 169. 4; 184. 1) an epithet of Savitr.[59] In x. 121. 10 of Rig veda, Prajãpati appears as an accumulation of many derivative elements. He could be Surya, Indra, Agni, Savitr etc. The hymn so reads: "Prajapati! None other than thou hath comprehended.

> All these (creatures) brought to birth.
> Whatever desires be ours in offering up
> The oblation to thee, may that be ours.!
> May we be lords of riches".

Here we see that towards the end of the Rig vedic period, the old gods lose their functional importance. Among the new arrivals Prajãpati becomes the creator God par excellence. Prajãpati is hailed as the supreme God, creator or better generator of heaven and earth, of waters and of all that are living, and as the king of all that breathes and moves about, god above gods.

The Ka God

The vedic poet has deliberately willed to demonstrate the superiority of Prajãpati by means of the special way of presenting him, i.e. in answer to a series of questions. The whole hymn (RV. x. 121) is put in the interrogative form and the answer is given in the last verse. The interrogative pronoun is *Ka* which

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58. Prajâpati is formed by the combination of two words *praja* and *pati*. Praja means offspring, children, progeny, procreation and pati signifies owner, master, husband, lord, king. He is the Lord of creatures; genius presiding over procreation, protector of life, creator. Prajapati is the supreme Being above vedic gods. This epithet is in the post vedic period applied to various holy men regarded as demiurgic beings (Cf. A. A. Macdonell, *A practical Sanskrit* Dictionary opus cit., p. 172; See also Atharva veda, x. 7).
59. RV. iv. 53. 2. Here as Supporter of Sky and Lord of Creatures.

means 'who'? or what.[60] This interrogation caused him even to be called as the *Ka* God and in the Brahmana literature (Taitt. Samhita, i. 7. 6. 6), prajāpati and *Ka* God are expressly identified, though in the ritual and in the mantras both are considered differently.[61]

Prajāpati is the Supreme God of the Brahmanas

In the Brahmanas Prajāpati is extolled to the position of the supreme Brahman, though he appears as its personification.[62] It is chiefly because Prajāpati was the only existing being in the beginning. This always refers to his main function as the creator. The statement 'Verily, in the beginning Prajāpati alone was here. He desired, "may I exist, may I be generated",[63] sounds very similar to the upanishadic passage of creation, 'In the beginning this (world) was only self, in the shape of a person. Looking around he saw nothing else than the self'.[64] Here Prajāpati is thought of as Saguna Brahman. Prajāpati is regarded as the chief of gods and in a special way the father God who produces everything. He, the highest Lord,[65] is the creator of the other gods too. Here we see the important gods of the early vedic period seeking in the person of Prajāpati their father. The Fire on the earth is God Agni in person, and is not a divine or mystic type,

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60. In the beginning the Golden Embryo (stirred and) evolved
Once born he was the one Lord of (every) being;
This heaven and earth did he sustain......
What God shall we revere with the oblation?
May he not harm us, father of the earth,
Who generated heaven, for truth is his law,
Who gave birth to the waters,—shimmering, strong......
What God shall we revere with the oblation? (RV. x. 121. 1-10).

61. Cf. A. B. Keith, *Religion and*...opus cit., p. 207; MaxMüller says, "......We find that the authors of the Brahmanas had so completely broken with the past, that forgetful of the political character of the hymns, and the yearning of the poets after the unknown God, they exalted the interrogative pronoun into a deity, and acknowledged a God *Ka* or who". *History of Sanskrit Literature*, opus cit., p. 433; see also SB. 1. 1. 1. 13; 2. 5. 2. 13.

62. SB. vii. 3. 1. 42.

63. SB. xi. 5. 8. 1.

64. Br. Up. 1. 4. 1.

65. 'Now these are the deities who were created out of Prajâpati, Agni, Indra, Soma, and Parameshthin'. (SB. xi. 1. 6. 14.).

but is prayed to as a heavenly friend.[66] But Agni and Prajāpati are one, being son and father. Both Agni and Prajāpati stand for all the gods. Agni is all the deities, since it is in Agni that offering is made to all the deities.[67] Prajāpati, known as the father God, is identified with the creator God of later times, especially in relation to his function as creator. E. W. Hopkins States that Prajāpati or Brahmā (personal equivalent of supreme Brahman) is not only the creator of gods, men and devils, but he is the all. Brahmā continues the work of creation eternally.[68]

Prajāpati and Creation

In order to understand the method of creation by Prajāpati it is necessary to have some knowledge about his relation with sacrifice. In the early period of Brahmanas, the concept of sacrifice was given so important a position in all the mythological concepts of that time, that it was considered an end in itself. Even the gods have attained the godhead by means of the efficiency of the sacrifice.[69] They have stated the importance of sacrifice in such a way that it was considered to be the omnipotent world—principle, by which they explained their cosmogonical, ethical and eschatological teachings. According to them Prajāpati himself, by means of his continuous sacrifice, created the world. This is a continuous process.

In every moment the world is being created and in every other moment it reaches back to its origin; next moment there is a beautiful world, but a moment after, it disappears.[70] It is the offering that brings out the new world. 'And he (Prajāpati), is the Ender, for it is he who, by day and night, reaches the end of the life of mortals, and then they die...gods were afraid of this Prajāpati, the year, the Death, lest he by day and night should reach the end of their life.[71] Prajāpati is the creator and

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66. E. W. Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, London, 1896, p. 184.
67. AB. iii. 1. 3. 1.
68. E. W. Hopkins, opus cit., p. 208; Cf. J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indien*, opus cit., vol. 1. p. 263; Ait. Up. iii. 3.
69. SB. iii. 2. 2. 28.
70. Cf. Raymondo Panikar, *Kult mysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum*, Freiburg/München, 1964, p. 91.
71. SB. x. 4. 3. 2-3. The Year, Death, Ender, etc., are other names of Parajâpati.

at the same time the offering priest and the offered victim, and also himself the sacrifice itself.[72]

The teaching throughout the vedas is to treat creation, not as something which is developed by the mere will of the creator, but as something lying in his very nature *ab initio*. Creation is rather a development than the bringing into being of something hitherto not existing in any way. Hence the way is paved for the doctrine of identity in the ãtman: the principle is manifested in the whole world. 'Indeed the whole world arises out of Spirit (Ãtman)'.[73]

Then a further step is made to identify the spiritual principle in each man (ãtman) with the spiritual absolute principle (Brahman). Still, the Supreme, for his own diversion (lîlã) ignores himself and submits himself to the influence of an illusory creative force. Under that influence he permits the unity of his nature to be partitioned into an infinite number of individual personal souls. In this process, the universe also is a fraction of the supreme. So creation never means production of something *ex nihilo;* instead, it means the ordering of an already existing matter into intelligible form.[74]

An Answer to the Why of Creation

The mystery of creation can be approached from different points of view, the main ones being the theological, the empirical and the cosmological. Thus we read in the Upanishads: "Verily, in the beginning, Prajãpati alone existed here (or prajãpati alone was this universe). (Cf. Muir, *original Sanskrit Texts,* p. 70).

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72. Once upon a time the gods and the Asuras, both of them sprung from Prajâpati, strove together...They went on making offerings unto one another. Prajâpati gave himself up to them. Thus the sacrifice (for Prajâpati is the sacrifice), became theirs; and indeed the sacrifice is the food of the gods'. SB. 1. 1. 1-2; It was Prajâpati himself who first benefitted out of his sacrifice by eating the food, SB. ii. 4. 4. 1.
73. R. E. Hume, opus cit., p. 16; This idea has been further developed by the Advaita school.
74. Cf. Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and*......p. 48; R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, p. 28. 'Hinduism does not accept the theory of creation out of nothing at a particular point of time', S. Nikhilananda, *Hinduism*, p. 38.

He thought within himself, how can I be propagated?".[75] This was the starting point of creation.

Why should this first impulse to create ever appear at all in the cosmic Being? According to the philosophical system of Samkhya, the creation is effected as a result of the breaking up of the equilibrium in the three gunas or qualities (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, representing goodness, activity and darkness respectively) in prakriti, one of the two fundamental principles to which Samkhya, reduces all things.[76] Here it could be imagined that the fruits of actions which remained unrewarded in earlier creations and have been in their unperfected maturity (aparipakva) are the cause of a new creation. This imprint of action is called bîjasakti, the seed power. In the preliminary stage of any creation, the seed energy begins to grow into a desire to create, this desire, which is the first conscious impulse, directs the unconscious will toward action.[77]

The First Three Creations

The poet says; "Three generations have passed beyond".[78] What does this signify? From the time since prajāpati began his creative activity, the present one belongs to the fourth generation; for the first three have already passed away. His first creatures were birds, then small crawling reptiles (other than snakes) and thirdly snakes. But none of these could survive as there was no

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75. SB. ii. 5. 1. 1.
76. For details see chap. V, p. 101-102.
77. The samkhyan explanation of creation cannot be accepted as such to interpret the creation effected by the cosmic Being, Prajâpati; for the philosophical interpretation does not agree in principle with the mythological source. But as regards the Samkhyan view, it would be interesting to see, how this activity is explained. When all the elements and forms that bear mark on the past have ceased to be, how their actions could be kept alive. The answer; Just as by the strength of a resolve to wake at a certain time, taken before going to sleep, we can wake up at that exact time, the decision to wake up having remained outside the realm of sleep, so, by the strength of the divine resolve taken when the universe is dissolved, the state of equilibrium comes to an end at a given moment, the previous actions bear fruit. This is how new creation comes to light. Cf. Alain Danielou, *Hindu polytheism*, London, 1964, p. 240.
78. SB. ii. 5. 1. 4.

food. So God created lastly the breast-feeding beings, which survived, since they found milk as their food in themselves. "And in like manner as Prajāpati created these living beings, so they are propagated: for whenever the breasts of woman and the udder of cattle swell, then whatever is born is born, and resorting to the breasts these beings continue to exist".[79]

The Search for the unknown God and Creation by Tapas

Looking for the way how Prajāpati effected his creation, we find that he toiled and performed acts of penance.[80] Three hymns of the Rig Veda are to be noted here in a special way: RV. x. 90, x. 121, and x. 129. The poet, feeling that the mythological gods are inadequate to explain the nature, searches after a real God, the genuine author of the universe to whom worship may be given. In the stanza I of RV. x. 121, the anonymous God is said to have become in the beginning a golden germ or Hiranya garbha,[81] in which the answer to the question as to the identity of the high God is found: the unknown God is Prajāpati, who alone encloses and encompasses and at the same time surpasses the whole of creation. The Lord of creatures thus emerged as a seed and is then identified with the All. He is the universe and the life and the life-force that pervades it, he is both death and immortality.[82] Again it is to be noted that, this Prajāpati is the transcendent primeaval being who emerged by means of a progressive development and remains at the same time as the Highest immanent being.

The vedic Hymn (RV. x. 129) refers to the same point. "Then neither Being nor Not-Being existed, neither atmosphere, nor the firmament, nor what is above it......In the beginning was darkness swathed in darkness. All this was but manifested water. Whatever was, that One, coming into being, hidden by the void, was generated by the power of heat......".

Two important ideas are implied in this description of creation by the One Supreme Being: Firstly, creation by heat, and secondly, the primacy of desire in the creative process. The word for *heat* (tapas) later come to signify *austerity or ascetic practices*

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79. SB. ii. 5. 1. 5.
80. SB. ii. 2. 4. 1.
81. Cf. J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens,* vol. i. p. 180f.
82 Cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism,* p. 41.

due to this idea; for it is deemed to generate supernatural power that may be put to good or evil uses. Special emphasis is laid upon the creation by means of tapas.[83] The creative internal glow is produced and accumulated by austerities and asceticism. The tapas following the vision of an idea was assumed to bring about the realisation of that idea. We read: Verily, in the beginning, Prajãpati alone was here. He desired, 'May I be generated'. He wearied himself and performed fervid devotions, from him thus wearied and heated, the three worlds were created: the earth, the air, and the sky.[84]

Sacrifice of the Primal Man—Purusa.

The hymn RV. x. 90 also called 'Purusa Sûkta' is of great importance. We have already seen that in the Brahmanas, creation is depicted as a sacrificial act. The primal Being is simply 'Purusa' or 'man' and in the later literature it would be used both in the sense of the Supreme Being seen as a 'person' and as the immortal substratum of the human soul. In this hymn no creator God is found to fashion an already existing matter. 'God' and 'matter' are in this case one, and the One is a primordial giant Man—the victim and prototype of all sacrifice.[85] That man is this whole universe, what was and what is yet to be, the Lord of immortality, which he outgrows (by eating food)'.[86] It is from this Man as a victim in the sacrifice, there came out all the vedas, the castes and all living beings. The primeval person differentiates himself into 'name and form', i.e., individuality. This doctrine culminates in the conviction that

83. J. Gonda, Die Religionen........p. 186.
84. The term tapas (literally heat, ardor etc.) is used to designate ascetic effort in general. Tapas is clearly documented in the Rig Veda and its powers are creative on both, the cosmic and spiritual planes. Prajâpati creates the world by 'heating himself to an extreme degree by asceticism (Ait. Br. v. 32. 1), i.e. he creates it by a sort of magical sweating. For brahmanic speculation, Prajâpati was himself the product of tapas; in the beginning non being (asat) became mind (manas) and heated itself, giving to smoke, light, fire and finally Prajâpati (Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom,* New York, 1958, p. 106
85. Cf. R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism,* p. 43.
86. RV. x. 90. 2.

this process is continued and is eternal: all that exists is from the One who is the All.[87]

Creation by Word

Among the various ways how Prajāpati created the universe, this is of particular importance. We saw the formation of the golden egg. The egg produced over the water (for in the beginning this universe was nothing but a sea of water) (Cf. SB. xi. 1. 6. 1) floated about. At the end of a year he tried to speak. He said 'bhuh' (this word became this earth); 'bhuvah' (this became this air); 'svah' (this became yonder sky). Therefore a child tries to speak at the end of a year, for at the end of a year Prajāpati tried to speak. On account of the creation by 'word', the Lord of creatures came to be considered as transcendent (unlimited, undefined) as well as revealed (limited, defined) reality, who reveals himself by means of 'Word' (SB. xi. 1. 6. 3. ff).

Creation by Incest

Of the creation myths in which Prajāpati figures, the most interesting by far is that of his incest with his daughter Usas.[88] First there was the Self alone, in the likeness of a man (Purusa). Looking around, he saw nothing. Then he said 'I am', hence his name is 'I'. So even to day, when a man is addressed, he says first, 'I am'. He did not find any pleasure 'as he was alone'. He wanted a second, he wanted to procreate. He became as large as a man and a woman in close embrace. He split (pati), this self into two: and from this arose husband (pati) and wife (Patni). Hence it is that every one is but half a being. From their copulation human beings were born. Now she thought it to be unjust to unite with him, as he is her generator. So she disappeared as a cow. But becoming a bull he copulated with her. In the same way he united with her as a stallion, he-goat, etc, producing all the creatures even to the ants.[89]

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87. Cf. J. Gonda, *The Supreme Reality*.....p. 117.
88. Commenting on RV. 1. 71. 5, H. Oldenberg states that it deals with the incest which the father God Dyaus has committed with his daughter. Cf. H. Oldenberg, *SBE*. vol. xlxi. p. 78.
89. Cf. Br. Up. 1. 4. 1-5.

Prajāpati in Decline

As the other early vedic gods, Prajāpati also had to give way to the later developed sectarian gods. In the Chand. Up. we meet him as a simple teacher who instructs Indra the true knowledge of the supreme Brahman.[90] Creation, which is his main duty came to be attributed to Brahmā.

BRAHMĀ

Brahmā, the first person of the Trimûrti, became prominent chiefly on account of the efforts of the orthodox Brahmins. This God of creation had his origin and basis in speculation rather than in popular cult, and therefore he did not appeal, inspite of his sublime character, to the religious feelings of the masses.

Origin of Brahmā

There are numerous myths dealing with the birth of Brahmā. According to the theory of Vyuhas, Anirudha, a manifestation of the Supreme Lord Vishnu produced Brahmā.[91]

The epic Mahābhārata represents Brahmâ as springing from the navel of Vishnu, or from a lotus which grew there out; hence he is called Nabhija, 'Navel-born'.[92]

The Saivaite Skanda Purana claims that Siva had a share in Brahmā's birth. Siva, addressing Vishnu said, 'When the first Brahmā died,[93] I came and had blissful commerce with you. Did you not then becoming a mother give birth through your navel to this (present) Brahmā.[94]

The parenthood of Vishnu and Siva over Brahmā, is indicative of their close relation with each other.

Brahmā is sometimes known as, 'the immense being'. It is

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90. Ch. Up. viii. 7. 1.
91. A.B. Keith, *The Samkhya System*, (2nd ed.), London, 1924, p. 40.
92. Cf. *History of Hindu Triad*, opus cit., p. 19; After the universal destruction Vishnu falls asleep, floating on the causal waters. When creation again arises Brahmâ appears on a lotus having the form of a warth, which springs from the navel of Vishnu (Matsya pura. 169. 2).
93. Cf. note. no. 55.
94. *History of Hindu Triad*, p. 19.

a cosmological notion characteristic of his function as the creator. The possibility of a form or of a perceptible reality depends on the existence of a place where it can appear and expand. The existence of such a place is due to the equilibrium between two opposites. The opposing principles may be those of dispersion and annihilation, light and darkness, the former being represented by Vishnu and the latter by Siva.

The source of the manifest world is therefore neither Vishnu nor Siva but the result of their opposing qualities, their equilibrium. This tendency is explained through activity, "passion" (Rajas). Brahmã (the immence Being) masculine or the personified form of the immensity (Brahman), represents the possibility of existence resulting from the union of opposites. Hence Brahmã is the source, the seed of all that is.[95]

Manu, who was born of Brahmã by his incest with his daughter *Vac* (speech) (here recall the incest of Prajãpati with his daughter Usas), gives the following account. This universe was enveloped in darkness, unperceived, undistinguishable undiscoverable as it were entirely sunk in sleep. Then the irresistible self—existent Lord, undiscerned, causing this universe with the five elements and all other things to become discernible was manifested, dispelling the gloom......He, desiring to produce various creatures from his own body, first created the waters, and deposited in them a seed. This seed became a golden egg, resplendent as the Sun, in which he himself was born as Brahmã, the progenitor of the world. The waters are called 'Narah', because they are the offspring of *Nara;* and since they were formerly the place of his movement (ayana), he is therefore called Narayana. Being formed by that first cause, undiscernible, eternal, which is both existent and non-existent, that male (purusha) is known in the world as Brahmã. That 'Lord having continued a year in the egg, divided into two parts by his mere thought. With these two shells, he formed the heavens and earth and in the middle he placed the sky, the eight regions and the eternal abode of waters.[96]

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95. A. Daielou, opus cit., p. 232.
96. Cf. Muir, *Sanskrit Texts,* vol. iv, opus cit., p. 3; Laws of Manu, i. 5-13 (*SBE,* vol. xxv.); Ramkrishna Gopal, opus cit., p. 43.

Chand. Up. proposes another theory of the cosmic egg.[97] we find a similar account in the Subala Up. too.[98] There we find that in the beginning there was a formless state which cannot be described either as existent or as non-existent. First darkness came out, followed by ether, fire, air and water. A golden egg was formed which split into two, the upper one being the sky and the lower one the earth. From the middle part a person of fantastic stature arose. Brahmã became afraid of the *death* created by this person.

Brahmã then created seven sons out of his mind. These, in their turn, created seven sons filled with truth. These are, verily the prajãpatis. The supreme Prajãpati of the early times, is here described in plural, their creator being the God Brahmã. Thus Brahmã is here seen gaining momentum'.

Brahmã in Mahâbhãrata.[99]

It is true that Brahmã does not occupy a supreme position in the epic pantheon. Still he is depicted as the supreme creator,

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97. Ch. Up. iii. 19. 1-2.
98. Sub. Up. 1. 1. According to this Upanishad (ii. 1), Rudra, the embodiment of anger sprang from the primeval person's forehead, while Vishnu, the Lord of the world is one of His creatures.
99. Next to Rig Veda Samhita, Mahâbharata is perhaps the most remarkable work in sanskrit literature. It is the biggest of the world's epics, containing hundred thousand verses. It represents the literary activity of the Indian mind, covering a vast period of about eight centuries beginning from 5th cent. B.C. Being encyclopaedic in nature it contains whole chapters on religion, mysticism and philosophy. It constitutes a veritable treasure house of Indian lore, both secular and religious and no other single work gives an insight into the innermost depths of the soul of the people as it does. A famous line of the epic says, that everything in the world is contained in this work, and what is not found here will not be found anywhere else (*Mbh.* I. 56. 33, quoted by H. Ray Chaudhuri Cult. Heri......opus cit., p. 71). The traditional view professes it to be a composition of the Holy sage Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, and is said to have been completed in three years. It is divided into eighteen parts called parvams. A supplement named Harivamsa also is added to it.

    The main story of Mahâbharata relates to the struggle between the two branches of Bharata's race, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The Pandavas, numbering only five, could defeat their enemies consisting of hundred brothers with their allies in the battle fought

eternal and wise. His paradise is located above that of Indra. In the Aswamedha parva, Brahmã is described as knowledge. It so proceeds: Brahmã is very far off, and his attainment depends upon the knowledge of the vedas. It is free from all pairs of opposites, it is divested of all qualities; it is eternal.........He who never desires for anything, who despises nothing, becomes eligible even dwelling in this world, for assimilation with Brahmã.[100]

Brahmã in Ramayana.[101]

In the epic Ramayana Brahmã appears on various occasions. Generally he is seen in the company of other gods as their leader.[102] Brahmã always keeps his position as the God of

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in Kurukshetra. Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, sided with the Pandavas in this battle.

The war in Kurukshetra has got signification also in the transcendental plane. That war can be transferred into the arena of our minds. The perpetual battle between the higher self and the lower self of man for establishing mastery over the body is symbolised by the fight between the cousins for sovereignity. Here we are face to face with the deep mysteries of life. The superman (Arjuna) under the guidance of the super self (Krishna), emerges successful in this conflict, after he has destroyed with the sword of knowledge ignorance embodied in his illegitimate desires and passions symbolised by his relatives, teachers, elders and friends ranged on the other side. In this interpretation, Sri Krishna is the Paramatman (Supreme Self), Arjuna, the Jivatman (individual Self) and Dhritarastra (father of the Kauravas), a symbol of the vascillating egocentric desires and passions (Cf. P.L. Vaidya, *Cult. Heritage*......opus cit., vol. ii, p. 69).

100. P.C. Ray, *Mbh.* As. Parva, section xlvii, opus cit., p. 119. This passage seems to present Brahmâ, making use of terms proper to Absolute Brahman of the Vedantic system.

101. Ramayana is the second great epic of the sanskrit literature. The book comprising approximately 24000 verses, arranged in seven books is ascribed to the poet Valmiki who is said to have lived in the second century B.C.; but the first and last books seem to be of a later date. Since the work as a whole was transmitted orally from generation to generation, there are several versions of the Ramayana. Books I and VII tell of the early and last years of one Ramachandra, or Rama, and treat him as the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. In books II-VI Rama is a more human, national hero.

102. Refer the *Ramayana of Valmiki,* trans. by Hari Prasad Shastri, London vol. iii., pp. 339, 618, 635 etc.

creation, but is never superior to Vishnu. Of course He reminds Rama of his Divine origin as the incarnation of the Lord Vishnu,[103] and invites him to return from the world when his mission on earth is over.[104] But at the same time Brahmã is always aware of his origin from Vishnu. He reminds Rama: 'Having formerly destroyed all beings by the aid of Mãyã, lying amidst the waters of the ocean, thou didst give me birth...... From a celestial lotus, bright as the Sun, that issued from thy navel, thou didst produce me and give me the task of creating the world. Since thou hast charged me with this burden, I lean on thee for support, O Lord of the earth.[105] Here we see that Brahmã is subordinate to Vishnu and his creative activity is according to the order of the latter.

Brahmã in Purãnas

In the abundant literature of the purãnas Brahmã has a very secure place. Of the eighteen major purãnic works, which vary in their length and content, six are devoted to the praise and glorification of Brahmã. In these texts Brahmã is shown with his predominant quality (guna) of rajas (passion). The main teaching of these works regarding the origin of Brahmã and the creation of the world can be summarized thus: The primordial essence is Prakriti and the active spirit is Purusa. The Lord Brahmã is sometimes identified with both these first principles. In the beginning prakriti contained the three qualities, goodness (Sattva), passion (rajas), and darkness (tamas) in perfect equilibrium. At the first stage of the evolution of prakriti, the great intellectual principle (mahat) was formed. From this was formed the principle of individuality (ahamkãra). The five subtle elements (tanmantra), sound, touch, form, taste and smell, which became manifested respectively as the five elements (bhuta), ether, air, light, water and solid matter evolved from the previous ones. This was the second stage, the elemental creation (bhutasarga). In the third stage, the ten organs of sense and action and the mind proceeded from the intellectual principle. These three stages were the creation from prakriti (prakrta-sarga). All these principles and elements, through the influence of spirits,

103. Ibid. p. 339.
104. Ibid. p. 625.
105. Ibid. p. 626.

combined and formed an egg, the egg of Brahmã (Brahmãnda). In it Brahmã assuming the quality of passion, became active. Brahmã brought the world into existence as the fourth stage. It is through his meditation that the animal kingdom was formed in the fifth place. Then followed the gods, mankind, intellectual notions called anugrah, and finally many semi divine mind born sons. In all these evolutions the three qualities existed in different states-grades-of predominance.

Brahmã—a popular God?

We have seen that Brahmã was not in any way a creator God in the vedic times, as Prajãpati. It could be said that Brahmã flourished as the supreme God only for a period, that is mainly during the development of Buddhism. For in the Buddhistic texts we find many references to Brahmã as apparently a very great and popular God among the Brahmans. But we find that He failed to gather around him as many adherents as the other great gods, Vishnu and Siva.

Why Brahmã is not worshipped?

Besides the mythological reason as narrated in the Brahmananda Purãna, where Brahmã was cursed by Siva for a falsehood, we find some historical and practical reasons too, for the downfall of Brahmã.

(i) the decadence of Brahmã corresponds to the fall of the orthodox Brahmanism. During the last four or five centuries of the millenium which ended with the Christian era, the orthodox vedic religion of the Brahmans had steadily lost ground, and the sects worshipping Vishnu and Siva had correspondingly grown into power and finally came to be recognised as themselves orthodox.[106]

(ii) Creation is the chief activity attributed to Brahmã. Once the creation was over, Brahmã has nothing to do. Thus He lost contact with the faithful, looking for the gods of preservation and destruction.

The old God, though he lost much of his past glory, was

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106. A temple at Pushkara is the only one known, where Brahma is worshipped.

by no means driven out. The new churches looked with reverence upon his vedas, and often claimed them as endowed with divine authority for their doctrines. Eventhough each sect asserted that its own particular God, Siva or Vishnu as the case might be, was the supreme Being and ultimately the only Being, both the groups allowed Brahmã to retain his old office of creation, since he held it as one subordinate to the supreme, Siva or Vishnu.

In this chapter we have described the notion of the Supreme Brahman—abstract and absolute—and his personal manifestations. Brahmã, the first member of the Divine Triad is only one among the different modes or forms of the Supreme. This will be clear in the coming chapters.

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In this chapter we have described the nature of the Supreme Brahman—abstract and absolute—and his potential manifestations. Brahmā, the first member of the Divine Triad is only one among the different modes or forms of the Supreme. This will be clear in the coming chapters.

CHAPTER III

Vishnu

In the first chapter, we have explained the position of Vishnu in the early vedic period. Even though only very few hymns are found in the rig-veda to his praise, he was by no means an insignificant deity. He was even considered to be the Supreme God, which position he acquired by the three great 'strides', by which he covered the earth, heaven and still beyond. Vishnu is invoked even in the Upanishads as the God of 'Wide strides'.[1] In the early vedic period it was Indra who was considered to be the greatest of Gods. This was mainly due to the temporal and economic character which the authors of the sacred books saw in him. But later, we see Vishnu worthy to be raised to the supreme grade. The reason was quite simple. In the constant flux of things and succession of forms, any power that is capable of preserving the world from ruin and will thereby enable men to enjoy long periods of happiness will become the centre of attraction and interest. Vishnu in his position as the maintainer of the world thus gained momentum.

Vishnu and Manifestations

In the chapter on Brahmã we have seen how the Supreme Brahman manifested Himself in a personal form, as Brahmã, that He might become accessible to the human beings. We shall see the theory of manifestations still further developed in the chapter on Trimûrti (V chapter). When we discuss the God Vishnu, we find the God still nearer to the humanity. At times Vishnu appears as the Supreme Being Himself who is engaged in the triple task of creation, preservation and destruction.[2] Vishnu is usually depicted as a man sleeping on the serpent Sesha that moves about in the cosmic ocean.[3] This appears at the end of a

1. Taitt. Up. 1. 1. 1.
2. Cf. Swamy Ramakrishnananda, *God and Divine Incarnations*, Mylapore, Madras, 1967, p. 133.
3. Cf. Solange Lemaitre, *Hinduism*, London, 1959, p. 62.

Kalpa when Vishnu, the Supreme One, absorbs into Himself everything that he had once created. It is the time of his non-manifestation, while creation means manifestation.

Vishnu in the Brahmanas

In the Brahmanas we read the story of a great sacrifice performed by the Gods. In connection with this sacrifice Vishnu attains pre-eminence among all the other gods.[4] Again, Vishnu is called sacrifice.[5] When any error is committed in the sacrificial ritual, it is Vishnu who is invoked, as though he was recognised in his aspect of grace as a Saviour.

Vishnu in the Rituals

Vishnu is seen holding an important place in the Samskaras or the sacraments of the Hindus. The position of this God in the domestic ritual might be of a very ancient origin. He is especially predominant in the marriage ceremony. The three steps which the bride takes ceremoniously is reminiscent of the three strides of Vishnu with which He traversed the three regions.

Creation out of Love

Vishnu is creator too. He effects this creation not out of any necessity on his own part but for his love of the world. In the *'Institutes of Vishnu'* we read, "The Night of Brahmā being over and the God sprung from the lotus (Brahman), having woke from the slumber, Vishnu proposing to create living beings and perceiving the earth covered with water, assumed the shape of a boar, delighting to sport in water, as at the beginning of each former Kalpa and raised up the earth (from the water)...... The Lord, the Creator, the great Yogin plunging into the One Ocean from the love of the world, raised up, with the edge of his tusks the earth bounded by the sea together with its mountains, forests, and groves, which was immersed in the water of (the seven oceans now become) one ocean, and created the uni-

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4. "People say, 'Vishnu is the most excellent of the gods",' *SB*. xiv. 1. 1. 5.
5. 'Now he who is this Vishnu is the sacrifice and he who is this sacrifice is yonder Aditya (Sun); *SB*. xiv. 1. 1. 6; 1. 1. 15.

verse anew. Thus the whole earth, after having sunk into (the lower region called) Rasatala, was in the first place raised in the boar incarnation by Vishnu, who took compassion upon the living beings.[6]

Other Gods Seek the Help of Vishnu.

Vishnu is acknowledged as the Supreme God by the other deities. Once there occurred a battle between the gods and the demons in which the latter succeeded. Humiliated by this failure, the gods decided to seek the help of Vishnu. They addressed the mighty God,

"Conquered in battle by the evil demons,
We fly to thee for succour, soul of all:
Pity and by thy might deliver us,
Hari[7] the Lord, Creator of the world.
Thus by the gods implored, all graciously
replied—Your strength shall be restored, ye Gods

Only accomplish what I now command"; Here Vishnu advises the gods, how the milky Ocean might be churned, from which Ambrosia, the source of all strength and immortality will be obtained.

The Supreme Being declared:
"Unite yourselves in peaceful combination
With these your foes; Collect all plants and herbs
Of diverse kinds from every quarter; cast them
Into the sea of milk; take Mandara,
The mountain, for a churning—stick, and Vasuki,
The serpent, for a rope; together churn
The Ocean to produce the beverage—
Source of all strength and immortality;
Then reckon on my aid. I will take care
Your foes shall share your toil, but not partake
In its reward or drink the immortal draught;
Thus by the God of Gods advised, the host

6. Julius Jolly, *The Institutes of Vishnu*, SBE. vol. vii, 1. 1-12; 'All beings, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), pass into nature which is My own at the end of the cycle; and at the beginning of the (next) cycle, I send them forth' (BG ix. 7).
7. Hari is another name of Vishnu.

United in alliance with the demons.
Straight away they gathered various herbs and cast them
Into the waters, then they took the mountain
To serve as churning staff, and in the ocean's midst
Hari Himself present in tortoise form,
became a pivot for the churning staff.[8]

Vishnu has been acting here as the saviour of the gods. But he joins with them, in a peculiar form adopted by him i.e., as a Tortoise. We have already seen that in order to re-create the world out of compassion, Vishnu became a Boar. Really it is through these different manifestations, which is called avatãra, that Vishnu becomes the helper of the humanity. This God is always known through any one of his avatãrãs.

Why Avatãra?

God is infinitely loving. He has intense yearning to communicate Himself with the mankind. The creatures by their own efforts are incapable of approaching the Divine Majesty. So the benign God condescends Himself to aid the mankind. God incarnates Himself on various occasions. All the avatãras of Vishnu are not known. They are innumerable. Krishna declares that the avatãras are so numerous that they can be compared to the wãves of the ocean.[9] Among these so called innumerable avatãras, only ten are considered to be of singular importance. But before going into the details, let us discuss, first of all, what an avatãra is, whether they are just the same as the concept of incarnation?

Avatãra—A Product of Rationalization?

The idea of avatãra has also undergone a process of rationalization. It is true that Vishnu appeared in different forms in the early Vedas and Brahmanas for the purpose of creation and maintenance. In some of the Rig-Vedic hymns we find the gods as guests of men (X. 21. 1; I. 30. 11) sharing in their solemnities and feasts as well as walking and moving with them

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8. M. Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, op. cit., p. 498, quoted from Vishnu purana, 1-9.
9. Ramakrishna said, "Avatars are to Brahman as waves are to the ocean", Cf. Solange Lemaitre, opus cit., p. 63.

(1. 139. 10). But it may be said that such Rig-Vedic passages do not express any idea of descent or incarnation, but are mere records of ancient theophanic beliefs entertained by the primitive people. And further it could be noted that Vishnu Himself did not in any way enjoy any singular importance in comparison with the other early vedic gods as Varuna and Indra. It was quite possible for him also to disappear in the course of time as it happened with the other gods.

In the beginning we saw gods emerging as simple personifications of the elements of nature. As the conquering Aryans got acquainted with the climatic changes of the country and as their philosophical and cultural thinking developed, their old vision of gods also had to undergo changes. They found that personal relationship with God cannot be long excluded even in the most refined philosophical approach to religion, and this threw light into the discussions on a personal God. When the many gods had merged into one neuter Brahman, the upanishads gradually had to give place to more personal terms, in which thought grace and faith could flourish, which was not possible in the purely impersonal and abstract conceptions of deity.[10] For these thinkers so strongly stressed God's aloofness and impersonality that their supreme Being Brahman was made a monistic Absolute Being with no personal feeling and sympathy for the needy humanity. Such a conception of God was not in agreement with the natural instincts of man. Consequently there arose another group, who took interest in the problems of life, and of the way of escape from its shadows to that which is alone true and alone abiding. For this latter group the central question was how a man can attain to that condition which is beyond the reach of change—which is bliss in that abode where there is 'no sorrow and no snow' (Br. Up. 10. 1). For the former the problem is more impersonal and less related to human fears and human fate.[11]

Avatãrs as such do not appear in the Upanishads. They are found mainly in the epics and purãna tales. The Avatãra of Vishnu is most popularly known in the appearence of Krishna, whom we meet in the Bhagavad Gîta.

10. Cf. Greoffrey Parrinder, *The Christian Debate, Light From the East*, London, 1964, p. 57.
11. Cf. Nicol Manicol, *Indian Wisdom*, p. 47.

Signification of the Word and the Different Occasions on which Avatāras Happen:

Avatāra is composed of two Sanskrit Words—ava = down and tr = to pass. It is therefore descent or coming down, partly in the spacial sense of the deity descending from heaven. It is the manifestation of the power of the Deity. Portions of His divine nature have descended into earth, assuming different forms, both human and animal, to deliver the earth in times of danger and emergency. They are still continually descending in good men, and living teachers.[12] At all crucial moments of the world's history the pervader appears as a particular individuality —who guides the evolution and destiny of the different orders of creation, of species and forms of life. Hence the story of his 'descents', of his 'incarnations', of his 'manifestations' is endless. It would ever be impossible to give a full account of the descents of the limitless pervader into the world form. "Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bharata (Arjuna), then I send forth (create, incarnate) Myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age" (BG. iv. 7-8). "Whenever righteousness wanes, and unrighteousness increases, the Almighty Lord Hari, creates himself".[13] Whenever there is a serious tension of life, when a sort of all-pervasive materialism invades the hearts of human souls, to preserve the equilibrium, an answering manifestation of wisdom and righteousness is essential. The supreme though unborn (BG. x. 12), and undying (eternal) (x. 12), becomes manifest in human embodiments to overthrow the forces of ignorance and selfishness. And 'there is no end to My divine manifestations, O, conqueror of the foe (Arjuna). What has been declared by me is only illustrative of My glory' (BG. x. 40).[14]

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12. In the conception of Vishnu as the divine pervader, he is even connected with inanimate beings such as light, heat, air, water etc. It is believed that his essence is infused into all these for special purposes; for example, into stones such as the salagrama, into rivers such as the Ganges, into trees and plants as the Tulasi, into beings as fish, tortoise, boar and lastly man (Cf. Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 46).
13. Bhagavata, ix. 24. 56., quoted in *Bhagavad Gita,* by Radhakrishnan, opus cit., p. 154.
14. In the preceding speech Krishna identifies himself with many living beings, thus revealing his different forms (Cf. BG. x. 19-39).

Love and Mercy of God.

In the avatāra the divine comes down to raise the earth to a higher status. The purpose of the avatāra is to inaugurate a new world. Whenever for a group of men or even for a single individual, those forms of knowledge that are essential for man's fulfilment of his spiritual destiny happens to be beyond reach, and thus human life fails in its purpose, which is realization, Vishnu is bound to make this knowledge available again and thus a new revelation has to take place. There is, therefore, a new incarnation for each cycle, to adapt the revelation to the new conditions of the world.

Love and mercy of God shows its power over hatred and wickedness. Dharma conquers Adharma,[15] truth conquers falsehood—the power behind death, disease and sin will be overthrown by the reality which is Being, Intelligence and Bliss.

Is Avatāra more an elevation of Man to God than a Descent of God to Man?

The concept of avatāra points out that there is no opposition between the life of the spirit and the life in the world. If the world is imperfect and ruled by the flesh and the devil, it is our duty to redeem it for the spirit. The avatāra points out the way by which men can rise from their animal to a spiritual mode

15. Dharma literally means mode of being. It is the essential nature of a being that determines its mode of behaviour. So long as our conduct is in conformity with our essential nature, we are acting in the right way. Adharma is non conformity to our nature. If the harmony of the world is derived from the conformity of all beings to their respective natures, the disharmony of the world is due to their non conformity. God does not stand aside when we abuse our freedom and cause disequilibrium. He does not simply wind up the world, set it on the right track and then let it go along by itself. His loving hand is steering it all the time. The conception of Dharma is a development of the idea of *rta* which connotes cosmic as well as moral order in the Rig Veda (Cf. Chapt. I. p. 19). The *rta* which gives logical significance and ethical elevation to the world is under the protection of Varuna. The God of the Gita is the upholder of righteousness—Sasvatadharma gopta (xi. 18), not a God beyond Good and evil, remote and unconcerned with man's struggle with unrighteousness (Cf. Radhakr. *B. Gita,* opus cit., p. 155); for dharma, cf. also R.C Zaehner, *Hinduism,* p. 2.

of existence by providing them with an example of spiritual life. The divine nature is not seen in the incarnation in its naked splendour but is meditated by the instrumentality of manhood.

Speculating more and more about this, philosopher's say that God is never born in the ordinary sense. Dr. Radhakrishnan in his introduction to the B. Gita writes. "Process of birth and incarnation which imply limitation do not apply to Him (God). When the Lord is said to manifest Himself at a particular time, on a particular occasion it only means that it takes place with reference to a finite being......When any finite individual develops spiritual qualities and shows large insight and charity, he sits in judgement on the world and starts a spiritual and social upheavel and we say that God is born for the protection of the good, the destruction of the evil, and the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness. As an individual, Krishna is one of millions of forms through which the universal spirit manifests itself......... The avatāra is the demonstration of man's spiritual resources and latent divinity. It is not so much the contraction of Divine majesty into the limits of the human frame as the exaltation of human nature to the level of Godhead by its union with Godhead.[16] But this opinion of the said philosopher is contrary to the general concept of Avatāra.

Sometimes the Gurus or true teachers were considered to be the manifested embodiments of God and by obeying and worshipping them, one worshipped God Himself.[17] It is believed that the scriptures can be rightly explained only by these gurus or visible Gods. For only God can lead a man to Himself and no one else.

The Cycle of Avatāra

Avatāras happen in regular cycles and at fixed intervals. This can be explained thus.

When God feels the necessity to incarnate Himself, He comes down to our level to be accessible to us and hence an incarnation is called Avatāra. As long as He stays with us here, he conquers all the enemies of the good and right-minded people by the power of His irresistible personality and infinite wisdom.

16. S. Radhakrishnan, *B. Gita,* opus cit., pp. 31-32.
17. S. Ramakrishnananda, *God and Divine*......opus cit., p. 18.

He establishes religion once again on the adamantine basis of truth. Before He leaves this earth, He imparts his illuminating power to his disciples by which they become the true gurus or teachers of humanity. These gurus teach their disciples, and this follows to various generations until it becomes very much attenuated and is not able to cope with the rising powers of irreligion on all sides. Then God again incarnates to establish religion, and this is going on throughout eternity.

How the Avatāras are Arranged?

We will find that the avatāras are arranged in the order of world's progressive creation and development. It was the purānas and upapurānas that gave a rationalistic ground to the avatāras. It is suggested that in the beginning there were waters everywhere and to suit this condition of the world, the first incarnation of Vishnu was appropriately enough in the form of a fish (matsya). Then the earth began gradually to shape among those waters. Here Vishnu appears as a Tortoise (Kurma), which can move with ease both in water and on land, the later stages of evolution, namely animal life in the forests, the life of wild humanity, the meagrely developed condition in human civilisation, the condition of warring cave-man, the development of family life and domestic virtues, and the growth of complex social and political relations—are symbolically represented—boar (varaha), man—lion (nara-simha), dwarf (vamana), Rama with 'axe' (parasurama), Sri Rama (Hero of the epic Ramayana), and Krishna.[18] Sri Buddha was not in any way considered to be an avatar of Vishnu, the redeemer, in the beginning. But as Buddhism rose against the orthodoxy of Hinduism, in the end Buddha also came into the embrace of the latter as an avatar of Vishnu. According to tradition, the Buddha avatar occurred at the age of strife as the embodiment of illusion (māyā) and delusion (moha) in order to mislead the men of low birth and genii who had become too proficient in sacred knowledge and thus a threat to the supremacy of the Brahmins. His teaching replaced ritual by moral values, in which the righteousness of the individual takes precedence over ritual observances. This, according to the Hindus, led people away from the vedic rules, made them disregard

18. R.N. Dandekar, *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. ii, opus cit., p. 236.

the hierarchy of society, and replaced intellectual and ritual values by a theory of morality. In this progressive conception, avatars in animal forms have been completely forgotten. Neither do they have any historical background. Only Sri Krishna and Sri Rama (of Ramayana) remained as gods in the popular religion.

Avatãra differs From Incarnation

By incarnation we understand that God takes birth in the world assuming human body and soul and lives with men. But avatãra does not singnify the same. It can be better translated as 'theophany' or manifestation, for in many of the so called avatars God is not understood to have assumed 'flesh', but only a certain visible form.[19] We have seen that all the avatars are not of equal importance. Even Krishna who himself appears to be the supreme Lord is not considered to be a full avatar of Vishnu.[20]

In the Vishnu Purãna, the reason for Krishna's avatar is given: "The titans and demons got victory over the gods. The Goddess Earth crushed by the wickedness of the enemies, approached Brahmã in the company of Gods for rescue from demons. Then Brahmã declared, "O Ye celestials! Myself, Siva and You—all beings—are no more than a portion of Vishnu. We know that the manifestations of Vishnu's boundless substance are moved by an everlasting tide. Violence and weakness alternate with order and strength—there is continuous waxing and waning of his grace......As we have seen, Vishnu is ever willing to send a minute particle of his essence down into the world—the world being but a manifestation of his pleasure". Brahmã, then together with others approached Vishnu and requested him to redeem the Goddess Earth from her enemies. Vishnu plucked two hairs from his head, a fair one and a dark and then addressed himself to the assemblage. "These two hairs of my head shall descend to the Earth and take away her burden. All the Gods, too, shall go down to her, each in a portion of his essence and rescue the Earth by conquest of the demons". There is a certain princess Devaki, the wife of Vasudeva, and who is like unto a goddess among men. This dark hair is to become the eighth

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19. Cf. C.B. papali, *Hinduismus*, vol. ii, p. 186; J.A· Cuttat, *The Encounter of Religions*, New York, 1960, p. 57.
20. See *B. Gita*, Chap. xi. The Lord's Transfiguration.

fruit of her womb. I shall descend into her and be born of her and shall kill again the demon Kalanemi, in his present incarnation, Kamsa. The hairs became presently a brother pair of hero saviours. The dark hair became Krishna; the fair one was born of Krishna's older but half-brother, Balarama, whose mother was another wife of Vasudeva, named Rohini.[21] According to Nara-Simha Purãna, Krishna embodies only a part of Vishnu's Sakti.[22]

The Conception of Krishna as a personal God very near to human beings is a result of the evolution of the knowledge of God. Dr. Radhakrishnan writes thus on this point, "We have to vary continually our notions of God until we pass beyond all notions into the heart of the reality itself, which our ideas endeavour to report. Hinduism does not distinguish ideas of God as true and false, adopting one particular idea as the standard for the whole human race. It accepts the obvious fact that mankind seeks its goal of God at various levels and in various directions and feels sympathy with every stage of the search. The same God expresses himself at one stage as power, at another as personality, at a third as all comprehensive spirit, just as the same forces which put forth the green leaves also cause the crimson flowers to grow.........[23]

Krishna was not an avatãr in the beginning

One of the stages in the development of the importance of Vishnu and the religion known after his name—Vaishnavism—is the absorption of Narãyana into Vishnu. The earliest reference to the God Narãyana is found in a Brahmana, where he is called

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21. H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*......opus cit., pp. 80-81, quoted from V. Purana, v. 7.
22. Cf. R.C. Hazra, ***Studies in the Upapuranas***, Vol. i, Calcutta, 1958, p. 239. Narasimha Purâna is meant exclusively for the glorification of Narasimha, who is identified with Narayana (or Vishnu) as one of the forms (murti) of the latter and is thus called not only Narâyana, but also Vishnu, Vasudeva, Hari, Mahadeva, Ananta, Krishna, Damodara etc.,...So NaraSimha though a form of Narâyana or Vishnu is himself the principal god also. It is this supreme deity called Narâyana (Vishnu or Narayana) who takes the forms of Brahmâ and Rudra for the sake of creation and destruction respectively; and for the work of preservation, he takes the forms of Vishnu, NaraSimha etc.
23. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hind Way of Life,* opus cit., p. 24.

Purusha-Narãyana, where he is regarded as identical with the Universal Spirit which creates from itself the cosmos. It relates that Purusha Narãyana pervaded the whole of nature (SB. xii. 3. 4. 1) and that he made himself omnipresent and supreme over all beings by performing a Panca-ratrasattra or series of sacrifices lasting over five days (SB. xiii. 6. 1. 1). Somewhat later we find prayers addressed to Narayana, Vasudeva, and Vishnu as *three faces of the same God* (Taitt. Arany. x. 1. 6).[24] The Vaisnavaite religion is formed as a result of a fusion of two tendencies, namely, the monotheistic sects of Bhagavatas and the mythologies of the masses. From the tribe of Satvata (One of the oldest communities in the W. and Central India), which was a Kshatriya sect, the idea of a personal God emerged by name Bhagavad or Vasudeva. The founder of this sect was a certain Krishna, who in course of time came to be identified with Vasudeva as his incarnation.[25]

Krishna of Gita.[26]

The Bhagavad Gita purports to be a dialogue between the

24. Cf. Lionel D. Barnett, *Hindu Gods and Heroes*, London, 1922, p. 76; R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaishnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Poona, 1928, p. 8. The production of the three forms (Murtis) from the Supreme Soul, Vasudeva will be discussed in chap. v.
25. Cf. C.B. Papali, *Hinduismus*, vol. ii, p. 39. Regarding the origin of a monotheistic religion with Krishna as the one God, We come across other narrations as well. Krishna was a leader of Vrsnis and other communities prevalent in the western and central India. He undertook to recognise the entire religious thought and practices so that they should command truly popular response, without however alienating them from the ancient vedic heritage. As a result the principal gods of the vedic pantheon, like Indra and Varuna, were superseded by new popular gods, the simple doctrine of Bhakti or loving devotion took the place of the complicated vedic ritual, a greater emphasis was put on ethical teachings than on metaphysical speculation. In the personality of Krishna they found active leadership. Thus Krishna, who was a tribal leader, became a tribal hero, later became tribal God (Cf. R.N. Dandekar, *Cult. Heritage of India*, vol. ii, opus cit., p. 233).
26. Among the interpolated didactic hymns of the Mahabhârata, the most important is the Bhagavad gita (The song of the Exalted One). The Exalted Singer is Krishna, who appears as a manifestation of the God Vishnu. Apart from some of the later additions, the Gita may well date from the third century B.C.

Pandava prince Arjuna and Krishna, who was serving as his charioteer, on the eve of the great battle of Mahabhãrata. In order to invent a leading motive for his teaching the poet represents Arjuna as suddenly stricken with overwhelming remorse at the prospect of the fratricidal strife which is about to start "I will not fight" (BG. i. 32), he cries in anguish. Then Krishna begins a long series of arguments to stimulate him for the coming battle. He points out, with quotations from upanishads,[27] that killing men in battle cannot destroy their souls, for the soul is indestructible, migrating from body to body according to its own deserts (BG. ii. 13). Krishna reminds Arjuna that for warriors there is no more ennobling duty than a fair fight. It is a privilege that leads to heaven. It is his dharma (BG. ii. 31).

Teaching on Salvation.

Krishna continues his admonition instructing Arjuna on the ways of salvation. For the maintenance of the world it is necessary that men should do the works of their respective castes. These works, when done without any selfish motives, and as offerings made in perfect unselfishness to the Lord, lead the soul of the worshipper to salvation in the Lord. Here Krishna suggests that the action should be done disinterestedly, without selfish motives. "It should be dedicated to Brahman, that is, it should be done because the Universal Order requires it to be done. This is tantamount to saying that one should do one's duty because it is a duty.[28] Here Gita takes up the Brahmanic concept of justification of action by caste obligations. If activity is required by the order of the universe, it rightly concludes that there can be nothing that can be set above it. This is the doctrine of Karma-marga.[29]

Doctrine of Karma and Transmigration.

The teachings of Gita give new light to the doctrine of transmigration.

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27. 'If the slayer thinks that he slays or if the slain thinks that he is slain, both of them do not understand. He neither slays nor is he slain (*Kath. Up*. 1. 2. 19, quoted in *BG*. ii. 19.
28. Cf. R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaishnavism*......opus cit., p. 37.
29. Jnana marga (way of knowledge), karma-marga (way of action) and bhaktimarga (way of devotion), are the three prescribed means for attaining salvation.

The technical term for a religious rite is Karma; and according to vedic belief, every sacred act produces its appropriate result or fruit. Here appears the doctrine of transmigration or metempsychosis. Krishna reveals: 'to the one that is born death is certain and certain is birth for the one that has died' (BG. ii. 27). The future life of a man also depends upon the good or evil deeds he performs in this present life. In the Ch. Up. we read: "Those whose conduct here has been good will quickly attain a good birth (literally womb), the birth of a Brahmin, the birth of Ksatriya or the birth of a Vaisya. But those whose conduct here has been evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, the birth of hog or the birth of a candala.[30] 'Verily one becomes good by good action (good Karman), and bad by bad action (bad karman)'.[31] The doctrine of karma is inextricably bound up with that of transmigration. For it gives reasons for the inequalities of birth, and the sufferings the innocents endure.

Of this doctrine there is no trace in the Samhitas or the Brahmanas, and it is only in the upanishads that we first meet with this doctrine. In the Rig-veda the soul of the dead is carried aloft by the fire-God, Agni, who consumes the material body at cremation, to the heavenly world where it disports itself with the gods in perfect, carefree bliss".[32] In the Atharva veda we read: "The soul receives a new, more subtle body, and its life is a replica of human life on earth, though freed from all the imperfections that are inseparable from it here. There will be eating and drinking of heavenly food and drink, reunion with father, mother, wife and sons, the enjoyment of the delights of love, eternal light and movement unrestrained, soft, cooling breezes and swift, refreshing waters, soft music and streams of milk, soma, honey, and wine" (AV. 4. 34. 5-6). Of the pains of hell the Rig veda says very little. In the Brahmanas the idea of the post mortem judgement appears for the first time. "Men's deeds are weighed in the balance and they are rewarded or punished in accordance with their good or evil deeds. Righteous is separated from the unrighteous in the presence of Yama, the ancestor of human race, who was himself the first to die and who was in the later litera-

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30. *Ch. Up.* 5. 10. 7.
31. *Br .Up.* iii. 2. 13.
32. R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, p. 57.

ture, to become the king of the land of the dead and personified death".[33]

We have already seen in the previous chapter that the creation of the world was not effected once for all, nor was there any end to it. From all eternity it had been recreating itself and dissolving back into its unformed and unmanifest condition, and these periods of evolution and devolution were called days and nights of Brahmã.[34] This idea of cycles in creation also helped to foster the doctrine of transmigration. The soul of man also passes from life to life in an endless succession. It is even compared to a caterpiller moving on eternally from one blade of grass to the next.[35] Krishna considers that the soul so easily changes different bodies and assumes new ones as a person casts of worn-out garments and puts on others that are new (BG. ii. 32). The gods themselves are not exempt from the law of Karma; they too are subject to the laws of cause and effect, and a day will come when the good karma to which they owe their exalted state will have worked itself out. Then they will be reborn as men, for it is only through a human incarnation that 'moksha' or final liberation can be achieved.[36] When we reach the Maitiri Up., which is the latest of all classical upanishads, we meet with the king Brhadratha disgusted with this perishing life seeks deliverance from it. 'In this world cycle of existence I am like a frog in a waterless well. Reverend Sir, You are our way (of deliverance), you are our way.'[37]

All Philosophical speculations of the Hindu thinkers, and that of the Buddhists too seek to answer the question of transmigration. The chain of births must be discontinued. The soul which is a prisoner in the body must be emancipated. The ephemeral, unreal, corporal existence must cease and the soul must be set free from the fetters of the body (sarira bandha) to attain the state of undeniable bliss.

Bhakti, as the Way of Salvation.

We now enter a new way that leads to salvation. This is

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33. R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, p. 57.
34. *Ibid.* p. 61.
35. *Br. Up.* iv. 4. 3.
36. R.C. Zaehner, pp. 62, 63.
37. *Mait. Up.* i. 3-4.

called Bhakti. What is meant by bhakti? It consists in the undivided love and devotion to a personal God and total dependence on his mercy and grace for the acquisition of salvation.[38] The word etymologically signifies resorting to and then loving the thing resorted to. It is used in this sense by Panini in Sutra iv. 3. 95; but the world as explained by the commentators, has a passive sense and means a thing resorted to, liked to, or loved.[39] In the Gita we see Krishna exhorting Arjuna on Bhakti. Krishna reveals his true glory to Arjuna, as a result of the latter's demand, (BG. xi. 13). Krishna, the manifestation of the supreme Vishnu told Arjuna that it would be impossible to behold him with his human eyes. So the supernatural eye was bestowed on him to witness the Divine glory (BG. xi. 8).

The vision of God is really a gift from God. In the transfiguration of Krishna, Arjuna sees all the creatures in heaven and on earth in the Divine form. Further he exclaims, 'In Thy body, O God, I see all the Gods and the varied hosts of beings as well, Brahmã, the lord seated on the lotus throne and all sages and heavenly nagas (BG. xi. 15). At the end of that terrific vision and transfiguration Arjuna says, "Thou art the First of gods, the Primal Person, the Supreme Resting place of the world. Thou art the knower and that which is to be known and the Supreme goal. And by thee is this universe pervaded" O thou of infinite form!" (BG. xi. 38). "The result of the vision on Arjuna was the expression of his profound humility before the Supreme ... bowing down and prostrating my body before Thee, Adorable Lord, I seek Thy grace" (BG. xi. 43-45). Krishna says that the form which Arjuna has seen can by no means be visible by any ordinary human means. Even the gods have never seen it. 'But, by unswerving devotion to me, O Arjuna, I can be thus known, truly seen and entered into, O oppressor of the foe' (BG. xi. 54). Here one is expected to adore God with all his spirit and heart.

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38. Cf. C.B. Papali, *Hinduismus*, vol. ii., p. 106.
39. Cf. Ramkrishna Gopal, *opus. cit.*, p. 41, Terms such as Bhakti, Bhagavad and Bhagavata are derived from the Sanskrit root *bhaj* which means, 'to adore'. Therefore the primary meaning of bhakti is 'adoration', while Bhagavad means 'adorable one', and Bhagavata 'a worshipper of the Adorable one', (Cf. George A. Grierson, in *ERE*, vol ii, art. on Bhakti marga). The definition of Bhakti by Sandilya is to this effect. He says: 'Bhakti is the supreme love towards God (Cf. C.B. Papali, *La Mistica Indu*, opus cit., p. 76.

The Lord gradually instructs him on the great mystery of salvation. Devotion is the path by which one can securely attain redemption. God explains, 'But those who, laying all their actions on Me, intend on Me, worship, meditating, with unswerving devotion; these whose thoughts are set on Me, I straight way deliver from the ocean of death-bound existence, O Partha (Arjuna)" (BG. xii. 6-7). And the words that "whoever at the time of death, gives up his body and departs, thinking of Me alone, he comes to my status (of being), of that there is no doubt" (BG. ix. 26), reminds one of the previous words, "He who sees Me every where and sees all in Me; I am not lost to him nor is he lost to Me" (BG. vi. 27-30). The Lord says that anything and everything offered to him in loving devotion will be acceptable to him, "Whoever offers to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, that offering of love, of the pure of heart I accept" (BG. ix. 26). Love of God does not demand anything very extraordinary from us. By the performance of the day-today tasks can one be near to God. "What ever thou does, what ever thou eatest, what ever thou offerest, what ever thou givest away what ever austerities thou dost practise—do that, O son of Kunti (Arjuna) as an offering to Me" (BG. ix. 27).

Thus Vishnu himself in the person of Krishna taught the way of attaining God. This is the way of loving devotion to God otherwise known as Bhakti. Bhakti is different from wisdom or science in the sense that one who knows a person can also hate him. It is not identical with the faith of Christianity too. In Bhakti, the bhakta thinks of a direct apprehension of the presence of God.

Prasāda—the Doctrine of Grace.

As the doctrine of Prasāda or Grace is a necessary complement of Bhakti, it would be useful to treat it at least in outline. The eternal wisdom and the final deliverance can be had only from the benevolence of God. By means of our personal contemplation we can see into us. But as we rise in contemplation we will experience the vision of the Supreme, which is entirely beyond the power of the soul to prepare or bring about. We will feel that it is wholly the operation of God working in the soul by extraordinary grace. In the Gita Krishna makes Arjuna know of this: "To these who are constantly devoted and worship

Me with love, I grant the concentration of understanding by which they come to Me. Out of compassion for those same ones, remaining with in My own true state, I destroy the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of wisdom" (BG. x. 10-11). Here the teacher makes out how bhakti or devotion leads to destruction of ignorance and the rise of illumination. When ignorance is destroyed, God stands revealed in the human spirit. When love and wisdom arise, the eternal is fulfilled in the individual. Already in the Katha Up, which is anterior to the Gita, we find the same teaching. "The Self cannot be attained by instruction, nor by intellectual power, nor even through much hearing. He is to be attained only by the one whom the (Self) chooses. To such a one the self reveals his own nature."[40] If man becomes aware of God's presence in the soul, it is due to God's own working in the soul; it is due to a special grace from God.

This grace consists specially in a certain intuition of God infused into the soul directly by God, which is totally different from all other knowledge of God, also that is acquired from the scriptures.[41] So it does not terminate in mere knowledge, but knowledge which has the character of bhakti—of intimate love —and so also called by the name Upasana.

Vishnu is Destroyer Too.

Vishnu as the Supreme Being is the Lord not only of maintenance but also of destruction. It is from him that everything, gods, men, and worlds take their origin and into him everything dissolves. In the Matsya Purãna (CLXVII, 13-25) a vision that the sage Markandeya had is described. "The cycle has completed. One day of Brahmã has elapsed. Vishnu the supreme Being, from whom the world first emanated in purity and order, now feels growing within himself the urge to draw the out-worn cosmos back into his divine substance. Thus the creator and maintainer of the universe comes to the point of manifesting his

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40. Katha. Up. 1. 2. 23; See also Mund. Up. III· 2. 3; in the Mahabhârata Vyasa says: None doth any act by virtue of his own power. It is God who engages him in acts good or bad O, Bestower of honour, (*Mbh. of Krishna D. Vyasa,* publ. by. P.C. Ray, Aswamedha Purvam, Calcutta.
41. C.B. Papali, *Hinduismus,* vol. II. p. 131.

destructive aspect. "He will devour the sterile chaos and dissolve all life spirit of animate beings, from Brahmã on high, the inner ruler and cosmic life spirit of the universal body, down to the ultimate leaf of grass...The ultimate elements melt into the undifferentiated fluid out of which they once arose...This is the interval of a night of Brahmã. Vishnu sleeps. Like a spider that has climbed up the thread that once issued from its own organism, drawing back into itself, the God has consumed again the web of the universe. Alone upon the immortal substance of the ocean, a giant figure, submerged partly, partly afloat, he takes delight in slumber. There is no one to behold him; There is no knowledge of him, except within himself."[42]

In the vision Vishnu told the sage Markandeya; "I am the primeval cosmic being...I have a thousand heads. I manifest myself as the holiest of holy offering; I manifest myself as the sacred fire that carries the offerings of men on earth to the god's in Heaven. Simultaneously, I manifest myself as the Lord of waters. Wearing the garb of Indra, the King of Gods, I am the foremost of immortals. I am the cycle of the year, which generates everything and again dissolves it. I am the divine Yogi, the cosmic juggler or magician, who works wonderful tricks, of delusion. The magical deceptions of the cosmic Yogi are the yugas, the ages of the world. This display of the mirage of the phenomenal process of the universe is the work of my creative aspect; but at the same time I am the whirlpool, the destructive vortex, that sucks back whatever has been displayed and puts an end to everything, that exists. My name is death of the universe."[43]

The destruction effected by Vishnu is nothing other than the reabsorption of the world and everything that contained in it into its source in the world cycle of creation and destruction. With the development of the Purãnas the followers of Vishnu have made him the Supreme and Absolute God who is the beginning and end of everything.

Vishnu as moderator and Maintainer—Opposition to Serpent Power

Vishnu's role as the maintainer of the world involves the

42. H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*......p. 36.
43. Ibid., p. 50. To find Vishnu asserting himself as the Supreme in this Vision, see chap. V, p. 105.

function of mediator or moderator, between the antagonistic energies that are active in the life process of the universe. He restrains the overbearing impact of the destructive and disruptive powers. This he does always by descending into the universe in one or another of his avatãrs, curbing and subduing the terrible forces that threaten general ruin, and finally restoring a working equilibrium of opposites. Vishnu in the form of the boy Krishna does this by subduing the terrible serpent Kaliya. In the fight between Krishna and Kaliya, the boy Krishna completely defeated the venomous serpent. Then the serpent exhausted, implored the victor: "I have only acted according to my nature. As you created me with strength and endowed me with my poison, so have I behaved...I implore you to spare my life to me and declare what I must do." Krishna in his mercy replied, "you shall not henceforth recide in the waters of Yamuna, but in the vastness of the ocean. Depart..."[44]

In this event, it is evident that Krishna played the role of a moderator. He liberated mankind from a threat and peril, favouring life against the slaying breath of the serpent, and yet recognised the rights of the destructive power. It is considered that the venomous serpent also was a manifestation of the Supreme Being in one of the darker aspects of the God's essence. There could be no elimination, once and for all, of this presence which to man seemed wholely negative. Krishna really brought the demons and mankind into an agreement. For the good of the humanity Kaliya was assigned to a remote sphere but he was allowed to remain unchanged both in nature and in power. Had he been transformed, redeemed or altogether eliminated the counterplay between human and demoniac, productive and destructive energies would have been disturbed—and such an eventuality was far from the intent of the Highest Being.

Conclusion

Thus is the nature of Vishnu, the Saviour, in his relation to the mankind. Among the three persons of the Hindu Triad, Vishnu and Siva are greatly honoured by the devotees, for they are very near to the masses. Vishnu, by means of his avatars was always present among men, is still present, and will always be found in future.

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44. H. Zimmer., *opus cit.*, p. 85.

CHAPTER IV

Siva — The Third Member of Trimurti

We have already seen in the first chapter some of the pertinent characteristics of Siva, the third member of the Divine Triad. It was mainly a study of the great God, based on the early vedic literature. Here we intend to see Siva in his different forms and functions, and above all his relation to humanity.

It was the God Rudra, that prefigured Siva in the Rig Veda. He was more related to the fire God Agni, than to any others, in his way of exhibiting the terrific qualities. For, among the forms of destruction, fire occupies the first place. But it must be noted that the Lord of fire, is a manifestation of Rudra. 'Agni is Rudra'.[1] This all-pervading subtle fire is the very God Rudra.[2] But he does not stop with this. Rudra inherited the qualities of the other vedic gods too. He was seen associated with Maruts, also called 'Rudras' his sons. But these Maruts are the constant companions of the king of gods Indra.[3] They, in association with the god of thunderstorm, pour down rain in torrents, create darkness thereby and cover the face of the Sun. Cosmologically Maruts represented the forces of renewal or regeneration which follow on the destruction of the older order. So Indra and the Maruts represented both the eternal renewal of the cosmos by the violent destruction of the old constricting order, by the annual renewal of the earth's life at the advent of the rainy season, and the subjugation of the human and divine enemies of the Aryans. One may see the later god Siva prefigured in the destructive nature of these vedic gods.

Characteristics of Siva.

In the Trimûrti, Siva has the function of destruction. But we will find that Siva is of such a complex personality that in him many contradicting and conflicting qualities meet together.

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1. *S.B.* v. 3. 1. 10; vi. 1· 3. 10.
2. *S.B.* ix. 1. 1. 1. For details confer the first chapter, section on Agni.
3. Cf. R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism,* p. 25

Siva is a powerful, wrathful and impetuous God, but at the same time generous, gracious and beautiful. He spares nothing when he is propitiated. In the Satapatha Brahmana (vi. 1. 1. 7) the God who is mentioned as the son of Usas, is known by eight different names, four of which representing his destructive energy, and the other four showing his benign counterpart. The name Siva has become his usual name in the Upanishads. Later it superseded the older names in popular religion. The two names Rudra and Siva are now used as equivalents, yet theoretically Rudra represents the fearful, manifest aspect and Siva the peaceful, transcendent aspect of the tamas tendency.[4]

Siva-Kala

Siva as the power of disintegration is known as Kala or Maha-kala.[5] His consort is Kali. The ordinary signification of Kala is Time. Before anything existed, Time is. This is the first condition for the existence of the universe. And Siva, the destroyer is identified with Time, Kala. In the Adiparva, we read that Kala creates beings and destroys people. Kala brings about good or evil states (or things). Kala reduces all people and again sends them forth for Kala is invincible. Santiparva after dealing with nineteen gunas, says that the twentieth guna is Kala, which is the source and end of all things. In the Anusasana parvam, we see: 'You are the origin of the worlds and you are Time, their destroyer'. Vishnu purãna tells that when the three fundamental tendencies (sattva, tamas, rajas) balance one another the flow that is the universe ceases to be. 'The Nature and person, Prakriti and Purusha, stand apart. At that time the manifest aspect of the supreme causal state, upon which rests Nature and person, now separate, is eternity or

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4. It was a common practice among all ancient peoples to propitiate what one fears, by speaking of it indirectly and with gentle names made of auspicious adjectives. Hence the name Siva.

   Siva has rightly been described as a reconciliation of opposites: he is good and evil, rest and activity, mild and terrible (Cf. J. Gonda, *The Concept of a personal God*.....Art. cit., p. 130).

5. The Sanskrit word 'Kala' has different meanings. Kala is dark-blue, black, due season, appointed time (Cf. *A Sanskrit Dict.* by Macdonell). But Kala commonly signifies time. The notion of kala as a creative power is peculiar to the Atharva veda. In the Brahmanas and especially in the SB. it is identified with the supreme creator Prajâpati (*SB.* 1. 6. 3. 35). See also, Sv. Up. 1. 1-2.

eternal time. Absolute time is thus the aspect of a transcendent reality which, at the time of creation, links Nature and Person and which separates them when the world dissolves.[6] Thus Siva becomes eternal. He lives eternally, as for him there is neither beginning nor end.

Siva—Hara.

Siva is the power of devastation, that sweeps away and destroys all things. He is Hara in the sense that He removes the bonds of the soul as also in the sense that in him the world gets resolved.[7] This aspect of Siva is identified with sickness and death, as well as with that all-dispatching power which, in the end destroys the universe. As he takes away everything, he is called the Remover, the Destroyer. 'As the destroyer, he is identical with death, with "Time". He is Hara, he who carries away, and in his most severe form he is Bhairava, the terrific, appearing in sixty four different aspects.'[8]

The Hindu mythology speaks that Brahmã, the first person of the Triad, created the world and all that live in it. The living beings so quickly multiplied that in a short time, the whole world was about to be suffocated. Displeased with this intolerable condition, Brahmã decided to destroy all his creatures. Then Siva interfered in the affair to avoid the great catastrophe. He succeeded in inducing Brahmã to substitute the universal destruction by individual death. On account of this benign interference Siva came to be extolled not only as the destroyer, but also as creator and preserver of the world.[9]

Siva-Auspicious

The great God of destruction acts as a merciful God in his very activity, for his destruction has as its scope restoration or re-creation.

Destruction always results in the formation of a new life. Life exists only by devouring life. Life is the image of the giver of death. As he bestows new life on them, whose life he

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6. A. Danielou, opus cit., p. 201.
7. T.M.P. Mahadevan, in *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*, vol. i. p. 371.
8. Louis Renou, *L'Hinduisme*, Paris, 1966, p. 41.
9. Cf. C.B. Papali, *Hinduismus*, vol. ii. p. 86.

has devoured, he is kind and auspicious. In the hymns of the Vedas, Siva, appears as the peaceful aspects of Rudra. 'Rudra, Your body which is auspicious (Siva), unterrifying, showing no evil—with that most benign body, O dweller among the mountains, look upon (manifest yourself) us. O dweller among the mountains, make auspicious the arrow which thou holdest in thy hand to throw'.[10]

It is believed that when beings are tired of action, of life, of knowledge of pain and pleasure, and seek the rest of dreamless sleep, they enter into Siva, who is the abode of joy, in whom the universe comes to rest and sleep. This rest in sleep is the ultimate mercy of the great God.

Generally eight qualities are attributed to this auspicious God. They are: independence, purity, self knowledge, omniscience, freedom from evil, boundless benevolence, omnipotence and bliss. There is no limit to His greatness. He is spoken of by the wise as Siva-sat or cit-sat. As cit (Pure-consciousness) Siva is incomprehensible and transcends human intelligence. As sat or Being He is to be realised through Divine Wisdom. He is above the known and yet He is not unknown.[11]

Siva-Natarāja (Siva as the Author of the whole cosmic Process)

Siva is most popularly depicted to be the Lord of Dance—Natarāja. The dance played by Siva is a cosmic dance, which keeps in equilibrium his activities of creation and destruction. Here He appears as the Supreme Lord of the universe, who concentrates into himself also the function of Vishnu—preservation.

The dwarfish body of the demon on which Siva is dancing represents the ignorance which is characteristic of unenlightened

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10. Sv. Up. iii. 5-6. Siva lives on the Himalayan mountains with his wife Uma, parvati or Durga, who has a number of other names too such as Kali, Karali etc., and is attended by a number of beings called his ganas or hosts.

    This God is known also as Girisa (dwelling in the mountains), probably because the thunderbolt that He hurls, springs from a cloud, which is often compared to a mountain, and in which He was believed to dwell (Cf. R.G. Bhandarkar, *opus cit.*, p. 146.)

11. Cf. T.M.P. Mahadevan, in *History of Philosophy, Eastern......opus cit.*, vol., i., p. 372.

souls.[12] This personified ignorance is subdued by God, and thus those who are chained to the samsara attain final deliverance. In one of his hands the God holds a drum which makes the rhythm of creation; the sound of which is the first element to evolve in the unfolding of creation. Another hand is uplifted to reassure against fear and signifies preservation. The God's tongue of flame is the instrument of destruction, that works at the end of a mundane period. The lower hands bestow protection and hold our prospect of salvation. The lifted left foot symbolizes the divine activity leading to the liberation of all beings. The seven streams of water rushing forth from each side of the head recall the myth that Siva once kept the heavenly Ganges imprisoned in his hair, before finally releasing it in seven streams.[13] The ring of fire surrounding the dancing God, finally, typifies the life-process of the universe, within which the dance of the Prime Mover, Siva is taking place uninterruptedly. All beings and the whole world are subject to eternal change; God alone is everlasting, immutable and imperishable who is the ultimate cause of everything that is transcendent.[14]

Siva's functions are fivefold. As the cosmic dancer he embodies and manifests the eternal energy in five activities: he unfolds or pours forth the whole of creation (Srsti i.e. creation), he maintains it (Sthiti i.e. preservation), he takes it back or destroys its phenomenal existence (Samhara), he veils or conceals his transcendental essence behind the garb of apparitions (Tirodhana i.e. obscuration), and he favours, or bestows grace, through a manifestation which is ready to accept the devotee (Anugraha). Of these the first four are aiming at the last one as their goal. The God effects the world process for the sake of the world's release. It does not affect in any way His nature. Siva remains the same whether the world evolves or not. He acts like the Sun in his performances. The Sun is impartial and is the same to all things; but because of him, such diverse phenomena as the blooming of the lotus, the emission of heat by the burning of things, evaporation of water, etc., take place.

12. The dwarfish figure is also interpreted to be suggestive of the supremacy of Siva over Vishnu. One of the incarnations of Vishnu was in a dwarfish form.

13. Ganges purifies everything. This river is the essential instrument of ritual purification.

14. Cf. J. Finegan, p. 177; J. Gonda, *Concept of*......loc. cit., p. 131.

It is the same Sun that makes some lotuses bud, some bloom and some others whither away. Similarly, but for the power of God nothing would move, and the world process would be impossible. Yet God remains unaltered by what happens to and in the world.

Siva as an Androgenous Being who creates eternally

Another noteworthy characteristic of the Saivaite idea of God, based on the belief in an androgenous primeval being, that has been transformed into the doctrine that Siva and his Sakti (The Goddess Durga or Parvati) form a unity.[15] Siva is in constant union with his female counterpart, Sakti, and it is their union that results in the formation of new beings. Siva, cannot join with any one, outside of himself. The mythological story of creation by the sexual union of Prajāpati with his daughter has been applied to Siva, who in his eternal union with his consort Sakti—the personification of his own 'power'—creates perpetually. The belief in such a union was well known to the vedic authors. The God divided himself into two, a man and a woman joined, half-male and half female. And it is the lust which is the apparent origin of manifestation. The union of Siva and Sakti is their basic reality. This is symbolized in the figure of the hermaphrodite (Arthanarîsvara). This manifestation of the two opposites has its philosophical counterpart in the identification of the purusa concept of Samkhya school of thought, with the male, and the Prakriti (the foundation of matter and of all processes in the universe) with the female component of God, who is the All. However, Siva, the supreme being is also said to be above Purusa and Prakriti.[16]

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15. Divine androgony or the coincidentia oppositorum is a common fact in many of the ancient religions. They express the union of two principles sprung from the very same divine origin which finally unite together. Since all attributes exist together in the divinity, then one must expect to see both sexes more or less clearly expressed together. Divine androgony is simply a primitive formula for the divine bi-unity; mythological and religious thought, before expressing this concept of divine two-in-oneness in metaphysical terms (esse and non esse), or theological terms (the revealed and unrevealed), expressed it first in the biological terms of bisexuality (Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in*.........419-421).

16. Cf. *Linga purana,* 1. 5. 11.

He enters into these two which have proceeded from Him and sets them in motion. It is explicitly maintained that inspite of this dual androgynous form of God He is one and undivided.[17] Between Siva and His inseparable power, Sakti, there is no difference what so ever. Multiplicity is eternally present in the unity of God's nature.

The symbolism of the Hermaphrodite is equivalent to that of the Linga (phallus) and the Yoni (female part). The male principle is also represented as Fire, the devourer, while the female principle is Soma, the devoured offering. The Hermaphrodite is then the embodiment of the cosmic sacrifice, the image of the universe.[18]

Siva who is considered to be permanently ithyphallic, yet perpetually chaste is beyond all these opposites and the opposites in Him are left to have been transcended.[19]

The Ithyphallic God.

Siva is popularly known as an ithyphallic God as having the emblem Linga or phallus. Even among his devotees, some may see this emblem only as an archetype of the generative organ; but others look to it as a sign, an 'image' of the rhythmic creation and destruction of the universe which expresses itself in forms, and periodically returns to its primal, pre-formal unity, before being reborn.[20]

The word 'Linga' means "sign", "emblem". The distinctive sign by which it is possible to recognise the nature of someone is called a linga (Siva Purana, 1. 16. 106). Siva the supreme God, in his unmanifest stage is said to be without linga, without sex.[21] The unmanifest being becomes visible to us by means of his manifestations. He manifests himself by means of his creation. And so creation is his linga. The linga i.e., the phallus, which gives life is one of the shapes under which the God Siva is generally represented.

The form of the God in this emblem can be traced back to

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17. Cf. *Vayu Purâna,* 1. 5. 11.
18. V. Tripathi, 'Devata Tattva', Sanmarga, quoted by A. Danielou, *opus cit.,* p. 203.
19. Cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism,* pp. 86, 87.
20. Cf. Miracea Eliade, *Patterns in*.........p. 7.
21. Cf. Sv. Up. v. 10.

the worship of primitive stone symbols, existed as early as the neolithic age. Many such symbols were discovered during the excavations in Mohenjodaro.[22]

The Siva linga is represented erect and is divided into three parts. The lowest part is square and is hidden in the pedestal. This is called the Brahmã part. The second part, which is octagonal and is grasped by the yoni, is called the Vishnu part. The third part, which is cylindrical and rises above the yoni is the Rudra part. "At the root is Brahmã; in the middle, Vishnu, lord of the three worlds; above is the fierce Rudra, the great god, the eternal giver of peace, whose name is the sacred syllable AUM. The altar of Linga is the great goddess; the Linga is the true divinity (Maheswara)" (Linga purana, 173. 19-20).

As the symbol of male creative energy, the Linga is often combined with the primary symbol of female creative energy, the Yoni, the latter forming the base of the image with the former rising from its centre. This serves as a representation of the creative union that procreates and sustains the life of the universe. Lingam and Yoni, Siva and his Goddess, symbolize the antagonistic yet cooperating forces of the sexes. They form the archetypal parents, the father and mother of the world.[23] Transcendent manhood is the immanent cause of creation while transcendent womanhood serves as the efficient cause. In the microcosm these principles are mainly apparent in the sex organs, which stand for the most essential physical function of all beings.

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22. Cf. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*.........p. 126.
23. The Linga-Yoni union is representative of the folklore and fertility cult not only of the Hindus but also of other primitive religions. Many a times the soil is considered to be the yoni while the seed sown is identified with the 'semen virile' (see SB. vii. 2. 2. 5). 'This woman is come as a living soil: sow seed in her, ye, men! (AV. xiv. 2. 14). The Laws of Manu also teach that 'woman may be looked upon as a field, and the male as the seed' (Manusmriti, ix. 33). A Finish proverb says that, 'maidens have their field in their own body', (quoted by M. Eliade, Patterns.........p. 259). When furrow was considered to be woman, spade became identified with phallus and consequently tilling with the act of generation. In all these the creative principle is symbolized. Referring to Sv. Up. iv. 11 and v., 2 where the God Isana is spoken of as presiding over all forms and yonis R. G. Bhandarkar states that it alludes to the philosophical doctrine of gods presiding over every creative cause (Cf. *Vaisnavism, saivism etc......opus cit.*, p. 163, foot note no. 1).

Everything in nature centres around procreation, for it ensures the continuity of life. It is in the union of the linga and the yoni, that divinity, the power to create, is most directly apparent in man. As there cannot be procreation without such union so there cannot be divine manifestation too without their cosmic equivalent. The mystery of creation can be understood only through the mystery of this union.

The Siva principle is the totality of the procreative power found in the whole universe. All individual procreation is a fragment of it. "From the relation of linga and yoni the whole world arises. Everything therefore bears the signature of the linga and the yoni. It is divinity which under the form of all individual lingas enters every womb and procreates all beings.[24]

Here one may remark that the linga-yoni union (siva-sakti union) is the link between the two worlds, the point where life manifests itself, where the divine spirit becomes incarnate. When the Hindus worship Linga, they do not deify a physical feature, they merely recognise the divine eternal form manifest in the microcosm. It is the human phallus which is a divine emblem of the eternal causal form, the all-pervading Linga. In the Siva Purãna we read, "He who worships the Linga, knowing it to be the first cause, the source of consciousness, the substance of the universe, is nearer to me (Siva) than any other being" (Siva purãna, 1. 8. 159).

Siva—The Supreme Yogi

Among the different significations of Mukti or Moksha we find that the souls once liberated from the chain of transmigration attain a mystic state of spiritual union with the supreme Being. The perfect union with the supreme is achieved by means of spiritual contemplation. Siva is the typical example of such a contemplation, i.e., He is the eternal Yogi. He appears as one who attained the highest perfection in meditation and austerity. In this respect he is represented as an austere naked ascetic (digambara) with body smeared with ashes and matted hair, abiding fixed and immovable in one spot. His Yoga[25] is uninterrupted

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24. Karapatri, "Lingopasana-rahasya", p. 138, (quoted by A. Danielou, *opus cit.*, p. 225.

25. Yoga is considered to be a means for the liberation of souls. Ety-

and he is the great master whom the yogins of all times meditate upon. He teaches men by his own example the power to be acquired by mortification of the body, suppression of the passions and abstract contemplation, which lead to the loftiest spiritual knowledge and ultimately, to union with the great spirit of the universe. In this deep meditation, Siva is unaffected by the affairs of the world. He is the example of the human soul both when it is 'fettered" and when it is "liberated". In him there is no distinction of persons, male and female coalesce into a wholeness. "You are woman, You are man. You are the youth and the maiden too."[26]

As he is the perfect ascetic he is known as Maha-Yogi, in whom is centred the perfection of austerity, penance and meditation, through which unlimited powers are attained.

Siva in the Epic Mahabhārata.

In the great epic Siva is mentioned several times. In the Drona parvam (chaps. 80-81), Arjuna and Krishna are spoken of as having gone to Himalaya in a vision and seen Samkara (Siva) at his dwelling. They bow their heads before him, sing a hymn in his praise. They address him as unborn, the creator of the universe and unchangeable.

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mologically, Yoga derives from the root yuj, 'to bind together', 'hold fast' (Lat. jungere). This word serves in general to designate any ascetical technique and any method of meditation. First of all, yoga implies a preliminary detachment from matter. The emphasis is made on man's effort on himself (to yoke) i. e., self discipline, by virtue of which, he can obtain concentration of spirit even before asking for the aid of the divinity. 'To hold fast', 'bind together', 'to yoke',—the purpose of all these is to unify the spirit and to do away with the dispersion that is characteristic of profane consciousness. For the 'devotional schools of yoga, this unification, of course, only precedes the true union that of the human soul with God (Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom,* Newyork, 1958, p. 7). Yoga aims at mastering the senses and the mind so that the mirror of the soul, unsullified by all temporal concerns, may perfectly reflect the God 'who is hidden in the heart'. The immanent God is to be known by yoga, and the transcendent God to be worshipped with loving devotion (bhakti). Cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism,* p. 84.

26. Sv. Up. iv. 3.

Still as a whole the epic does not present Him as the Supreme God. The title Mahadeva, by which Siva is well known, is an attribute of Vishnu in Mahabhărata (Mbh. 3. 84. 147). There is always tension and rivalry between the two gods. This is never wholly dissipated even when the two gods are lately fused into the single figure Hari-Hara, Hari, being one of the names of Vishnu and Hara of Siva.

Siva's position is not in any way better in the early purănas too. In the first classic purănas (Vi. p., Matsya p., Brahmă p. etc.), Siva is no more than a function or mask assumed by Vishnu whenever the moment approaches for the absorption of the universe. Only in a later stratification of purănic faith (Markandeya, Kurma etc.) do we find Siva coming to the fore to enact independently and alone all three of the great world roles of creation, preservation and destruction.[27]

But when we reach the time of the Svetasvatara Up., we find for the first time the Absolute Being identified with the personal God, Rudra-Siva.[28] So it is at the end of a long period of progressive development that Siva reached this highest position. And once the Absolute has been identified with a particular God, the natural consequence was that he came to be associated with all the mythological figures of the past. Thus in him are combined the terrible Rudra of the Rig Veda and the ithyphallic yogin of the Harappa seals, and however much his worship may be spiritualised, these basic characteristics never leave him.[29]

Incarnations?

Siva does not claim to have any avatăr or incarnation as the other principal Deity Vishnu. Perhaps the thinkers do not want to limit or concentrate His Divinity in a few incarnate forms. God does not see any necessity of adopting a carnal body. According to the aspect of his divinity envisaged, he appears as one or three or eight or many. In fact he "appears in the form in which He is worshipped by His devotee and also in the forms that are required to save the soul. But all such forms are not

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27. Cf. H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*, p. 84.
28. *Sv. Up.* iii. 11, ii. 17.
29. R. C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, p. 84.

made of matter; they are the expression of his grace".[30] His different aspects are represented by his various names. One thousand and eight names are given to him in the Siva purãna (ch. 69) and in the seventeenth ch. of the Anuswara parvam of the Mahãbharata.

Siva and Salvation.

Knowledge of Siva is considered to be the only means of attaining eternal peace and salvation. In the sectarian Up. of Svetasvatara the devotee declares; "More minute than the minute, in the midst of confusion, the creator of all, of manifold form, the one embracer of everything, by knowing Him as the auspicious, one attains peace for ever".[31] Kalidasa, the greatest of Indian poets, acknowledges that by being a devotee of Siva one may attain eternal bliss; "May he, who is hailed by the vedantas as the supreme spirit, who still remains (transcendent) after pervading (both heaven and earth), to whom alone the specific designation Isvara (Supreme Ruler) applies true to a syllable, and he who is sought inwardly by restraining prana and the other vital airs, by those who desire to attain (complete) emancipation, (may he) the eternal, who is easily attainable by the path of steadfast devotion bestow you supreme bliss" (Vikramorvasiya).[32] In order to attain salvation it is enough that one may know the auspicious God, "By knowing Him the auspicious, hidden in all beings like the film exceedingly fine that rises out of clarified butter, the one embracer of the universe, by knowing God one is released from all fetters".[33]

It is Siva (also called Iswara or Maheswara), who as the world's creator, is generally named after 'God'. The whole of creation, the whole existence seem to merge in this indivisible undifferentiated 'God'. This 'God' is above all the gods; he is

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30. T. M. P. Mahadevan, in *History of philosophy Eastern and Western*, p. 373. Three forms of Siva are generally distinguished; (i) bhaga-rupa, which grants enjoyment to souls; (ii) ghora rupa, which destroys the karmans of souls, and (iii) yoga rupa, which effects the release of souls.
31. *Sv. Up.* iv. 14.
32. Quoted by S. Radhakrishnan, in Introduction to *The Meghaduta of Kalidasa*, ed. by S. K. De, New Delhi, 1957, p. 14.
33. *Sv. Up.* iv. 16.

the indivisible whole of all the deities, is the transcendent Divinity. "This unity of all that exists is represented by the unity of the three elements, which constitute the nature of the cosmos, of the cosmic sacrifice; Might (Indra), the devourer (Agni) and the devoured (Soma), the three main aspects of Siva".[34]

How the God of Destruction became Important?

Generally all consider the forces of destruction with awe and fear. But Siva, the great disintegrating power is worshipped as the greatest of gods. The reason is evident. All that has a beginning must of necessity have an end. All that is born must die, all that comes into existence must cease to exist. Thus every existing thing unfailingly aims toward disintegration. The universal power of destruction in which all existence ends and from which it rises again is Siva, the Lord of sleep, who is sometimes extolled to the position of Brahman, "from which beings are born, by which when born they live, that into which when departing, they enter".[35]

Siva is the embodiment of tamas, the quality tending towards disintegration and annihilation. "When the universe expands indefinitely it dissolves and gradually ceases to exist. Nothing that has existence can escape this process of destruction. And it is to be noted that it is from destruction that creation again rises; hence destruction is the ultimate cause, the unmanifest origin, of creation".[36] He who remains intact in the beginning and at the end is Siva alone, who is the power of disintegration. So Siva maintains the most sublime position among gods.

A Word on Saivism, especially on the system, Pasupata

Some of the most profound aspects of Hindu thought have been linked in the past, as they are still now, with the philosophy

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34. A. Danielou, *opus cit.*, p. 199. "What is perishable is the Pradhana (primary matter). What is immortal and imperishable is Hara (the Lord). Over both the perishable and the soul the one God rules. By meditating on Him, by uniting with Him, by reflecting on His being more and more, there is complete cessation from the illusion of the world' *SV. Up.* 1. 10.
35. *Tai. Up. iii.* 1. 1.
36. A. Danielou, *opus cit.*, 190.

of Saivism. This philosophy originally distinct from that of the vedas, has been gradually assimilated by the conquering Aryans. As Siva gradually gained momentum among the gods of the vedic pantheon, his worshippers began to engage in philosophical speculation too. It was mainly in the Tamil lands of India that Saivism (Saivism of Kashmir also is of special importance) began to flourish. This was due to the work of a series of saints who spread the gospel that salvation could be won only by a total surrender to Siva. The philosophy of the Saiva-Siddhanta, is based as much on the Svetasvatara Up. as it is on the writings of the tamil saints, but it was the influence of the latter that made the writers of the Siddhanta attach such enormous importance to the doctrine of grace freely given by God.

In the pasupata system of the saiva siddhanta all existence is divided into pati, Pasu and Pasa, which means the Lord, the cattle and the fetters with which the cattles or souls are bound. Siva is the Lord (pati), who is pure and perfect, just and gracious, almighty and omnipresent. The fetters (pasa) by which Siva bind the souls are three in number: maya,[37] which is real and without beginning in time, Karma, that stands for the acts of individual souls and their good and evil fruits, and thirdly there is *anava* which is the source of the soul's ignorance and arrogance. Literally 'anava' is the quality of being minute', which being the principle of individuation, keeps the soul shut up within itself. This principle is always at war with the soul, since it separates it from God.[38] And it is this pitiable condition of the souls that inspired Siva to create the material world by drawing it out from the potential and unmanifested state to the actual and manifest state.[39] Creation according to this doctrine, is an act of the mercy of Siva. The souls have to undergo this life of probation that they may overcome the anava condition.

Conclusion.

Our discussion on the third member of the divine Triad has been limited to some of his most important aspects. As in the case of Vishnu, this God also is seen to be extolled to be the

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37. Maya in Saivism differs from the illusory power of the vedanta.
38. Cf. R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism,* p. 88.
39. Cf. C. B. Papali, *Hinduismus,* vol. ii, p. 173.

highest of gods disregarding all others. The common tendency of exaggeration of the divine persons is evident in the case of Siva too. He assumes the triple task of creation, preservation and destruction, even though his common title is destroyer. In the Sv. Up. we read: "Truly Rudra is one, there is no place for a second, who rules all these worlds with his ruling powers. He stands opposite to creatures. He, the protector, after creating the worlds withdraws them at the end of time" (iii. 2). Even the destruction of Siva is acclaimed to be an act of mercy, an act which leads to a new and better creation.

CHAPTER V

Trimurti

We have discussed in the first chapter the concept of the Hindu Trinity in a very general way. It was the time of the vedas. A religion was slowly taking shape, that had as for its background the elements and powers of nature. As the vedic men saw by their simple observation the universe as a three storeyed building, guardians for each story were also thought of quite naturally. The triple division of the worlds and gods found in the vedas was however not very clear and distinct. In our discussion on Surya, Indra and Agni, we saw that their functions and powers were not limited to their own spheres.[1] Each one of them could be seen operating in all the three worlds in different forms and different ways. As a consequence dissension among them was not unusual. Who was more powerful? Who was the chief among them? At times Surya was the all-god, and the same could be said about the other gods too. In fact there was neither any relation nor any unity among the three chief gods of the so called vedic Trinity. For the ordinary man of the vedas each one of these gods appeared as a result of his simple observations. What touched them profoundly was that these gods were of great profit to them, for their warfare, in their agriculture and for their sacrifice. So their division according to the three different regions has been changed into a division on the basis of their functions. Creation, conservation and destruction—all these operations of the later members of the Hindu Trinity could be seen prefigured in the actions of all these gods.

In the second chapter we found that Brahmã as creator was absent in the early vedic texts; Siva was prefigured by the terrible

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1. The most prominent characteristic of the vedic gods was power, for they were constantly described as "great and mighty". They were benevolent beings who bestowed prosperity on mankind, the only one in whom injurious traits appear being Rudra. They were described as 'true' and 'not desceitful', being 'protectors and friends of the honest and righteous', but 'punishing sin and guilt'.

god Rudra; while Vishnu, though he does not appear frequently was still great on account of his three strides. By the three steps by which he covered all the three worlds, he became the greatest of all the gods. Yet there was no mention of a future union of all these two gods and they in their turn with the creator god Brahmã.[2]

The progressive Conception of Gods.

Each age of thought in the Hindu Religion was an advancement over the preceding age. The Vedas spoke of gods, the Brahmanas presented a Father god in the person of Prajãpati (later identified with Brahmã), and the Upanishads taught a supreme god-head Brahman of which this father god was the personification. Then followed the major religious sects, of which Saivism and Vaishnavism are to be especially mentioned. These sects, though they insisted upon their particular deities still carried with them the older pantheon as well, and with the pantheon its earlier and later heads—Indra and Brahmã.[3] The popular name Harihara (as a result of the union of Vishnu and Siva), that has emerged in the Harivamsa, is also considered to be in the line of this progressive development culminated in Trimûrti.[4]

Such being the case we have to find the reasons that led to the formation of the Trimûrti, giving explanations philosophical, theological and mythological.

Triads in the Upanishads

The early Upanishads, such as Brhad-Aranyaka, Chandogya, Isha etc, do not speak on Trimûrti. Their main emphasis is laid

2. Again it must be noted that these Vedic gods lacked individuality. Having many features such as power, brilliance, benevolence and wisdom in common with others, each God possessed very few distinctive attributes. As nearly every power could be attributed to every god, the identification of one deity among the others became impossible. The idea that various deities are but different forms of a single Divine Being has its remote origin in this vagueness in considering the dfferent functons of the deities.
3. Cf. E. W. Hopkins, *The Religions of India,* p. 415.
4. *Ibid.* p 464; *ERE.* vpl. 12, p. 458. The combined name of Harihara appears first in the 'Harivamsa', which is a supplement of the Gita of Mahabhârata. This view is rendered probable by the fact that the epic appears to have identified Vishnu and Siva as equals before it enlisted Brahmâ also in that group.

on the unity of the God-head, the Supreme Brahman. But the existence of an initial triad is found also in some of them. The Chandogya speaks of a union of three colours, which was lately adopted by the philosophical school of Samkhya, in the form of the three gunās or qualities.[5] 'Whatever red form the Sun has it is the form of heat, Whatever (is) white (it is the form) of water. Whatever (is) dark (it is the form) of earth. Thus vanishes the quality of the Sun from the Sun, the modification being only a name arising from speech while the truth is that it is olny the three forms'.[6] What is implied in these lines is that all things are ultimately modifications of the pure being. The primordial being becomes in a way three deities, which are fire, water and earth. This idea is expressed explicitly when the Upanishad says later; 'They knew that whatever appeared unintelligible is a combination of just these three divinities. Each of these three divinities, when they reach the human, becomes three fold'.[7] Everything in the world is thus declared to be connected with the three elements, the red of fire, the white of water and the black of earth. It alludes to the order of creation, when the absolute first produced heat, then water, which is followed by earth.

The mention of these three colours has to be related to another passage found in the Svetasvatara Upanishad. There the supreme Being, who is unborn is painted in red, white and black colours as producing manifold offsprings. "The one unborn, red, white and black, who produces manifold offspring similar in form (to herself), there lies the one unborn (male) delighting. Another unborn gives her up having had his enjoyment".[8] Here: Unborn... Prakriti or nature is without beginning, from the relative stand point.

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5. Cf. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upainshads*, p. 452.
6. *Ch. Up.*, Vi. 4. 1-2.
7. Ch. Vi. 4. 7. The doctrine of trivrt-karana, which is the basis of the doctrine of Pancikarana, has its origin in the division of these three primary elements. The theory states that each of the three original elements, fire, water and earth is to be regarded as being divided into two equal portions, of which one half is kept intact and the other half is divided into two equal parts, the two quarters of the two other elements in combination with the one half of the original element. (Cf. Radhakrishnan, *Pr. Upanishads*, p. 452).
8. *Sv. Up.* iv. 5.

Red, white... etc., The passage denotes the three gunãs—rajas, sattva, and tamas—which constitute one of the eternal principles-prakriti (as in the case of Ch. Up. Vi. 4. 1. ff). Gives birth—The tangible products of the universe are products of Prakriti.

Similar in form: All physical objects have for their cause Prakriti which consists of the three gunãs.

One Unborn (male): stands for the individual self, that is without beginning. As determined by its desires and actions, it becomes attached to different material objects. Thus forgetting its true nature, it regards itself as a material object and enjoys other similar objects.

Another unborn: refers to the individual soul whose ignorance has been destroyed and who consequently renounces material objects. Gives her up, having......—A phenomenal jiva (individual soul) cultivates dispassion for the world only after realising the transitory nature of its objects through the experience of many births.

This verse of the Upanishad is greatly prized by the Samkhya philosophers. It is by the action of purusha on prakriti that the world process of creation and annihilation is being repeated. Prakriti or Nature consisting of three gunãs is activated by the manifold purushas one after another. A Purusha comes under the spell of prakriti, forgets his real nature, and becomes attached to the world of matter. After repeated experiences of material pleasures, he at last becomes satiated with them and relinquishes the world. But prakriti casts her spell over another purusha, and the cosmic process thus continues without coming to an end.

According to A. B. Keith the idea of the relation of nature (parakriti) to the many spirits (purushas) is obviously expressed in this metaphor.[9]

But this samkhyan interpretation of the upanishadic passage is not admitted by all. From the Brahma Sutra of Badarayana, we learn that the she goat of red, white and black colours cannot be treated as equivalent to Pradhana (Prakriti or nature), pos-

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9. A. B. Keith., *Religion and...opus cit.*, p. 540.

sessing the three qualities.[10] According to the author there are no special reasons that justify us in understanding these three colours as meaning pradhana and not anything else. The reference of these three colours to the three qualities of nature in the Samkhya system may be due to later developments.

Now, to arrive at a better understanding of the idea of Trimûrti in the upanishads, it would be opportune to have some knowledge of the Samkhya philosophical school.

Samkhya—Origin and Name

This school of thought is of great importance among the philosophical systems of India. The author of this system is Kapila, who is said to have lived in the 6th cent. B.C. All the original works of this school have been lost. The most ancient one existing is the Samkhya Karika of Iswara Krishna in 3rd cent. A.D.

The system takes its name from the fact that it arrives at its conclusions by means of theoretical investigations. The word Samkhya is said to be derived from 'Samkhya' or number. It signifies enumeration or investigation. It is proper since it deals with an analytical enumeration of the principles of the universe.

The Samkhya finds the cause of the whole universe in two primary principles namely, prakriti and purusha. The former is the eternal productive germ, also known as pradhana. The spirit or the second eternal principle called purusha does not produce anything. Prakriti is one only, while spirits are numerous. Creation is effected from prakriti only when it unites with some eternally existing spirit. Prakriti is supposed to be the equipoise of three 'constituent elements, called gunãs—sattva, rajas and tamas. The gunãs are not material, but are capable of mutual attraction, repulsion and experience.[11] These gunãs are not

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10. *Brahma-Sutra,* 1. 4. 8: Sankara also differs with the Samkhyan view. He refers the three colurs, to fire, water and Earth of the Ch., Up. to his defence. Swami Nikhilananda writes on this: One thing, however, seems to be clear about the Svet. Up. that it teaches the unity of souls on the non-dual Atman where as Samkhya speaks of an ultimate plurality of souls. S. Nikhilananda, *The Upanishads,* (A second selection), London 1957, p. 38).
11. Radhakrishnan, *Indian philosophy,* vol. ii. London, 2nd Ed., 1931, p. 544.

properly qualities though certain qualities result from them. This term simply denotes that they act like 'cords', to bind the spirit with triple bonds.[12] Sometimes they are regarded as equivalent to happiness, pain and ignorance. Max Müller represents them as thesis, antithesis and something between the two; cold, warm, neither cold nor warm; or bright, dark, neither bright nor dark.[13]

The Three qualities in Relation to the Three Gods

The three gunãs cannot be said to be existing completely separate from one another. Goodness, passion and darkness are seen existing in a state of union, a state of equilibrium. They are mutually related; each one depending on the other. "There is no doubt in this. As long as darkness and goodness exist, so long does passion exist. They, verily move in a body, when they act with cause or without cause".[14] The gunãs are not perceived, but are inferred from their effects. The first of these, sattva, is potential consciousness, and therefore tends to conscious manifestation. The word is derived from 'sat' or 'that which is real' or 'existent'. Since consciousness is generally granted such existence, sattva is said to be potential consciousness.[15] As 'sat' means also perfection, it is that which produces goodness and happiness. Rajas, the second one is the source of all activity, and that produces pain. It leads to a life of feverish enjoyment and restless effort. The third element 'tamas' stands for darkness. It reduces every type of activity and produces the state of apathy and indifference. It leads to ignorance and sloth.[16] The function of the first is to illuminate, of the second to activate, and of the third to constrict. Sattva is light and illuminative, rajas is stimulating and mobile, while tamas as heavy and confining (Cf. B. G. xiv. 6-13).[17] In the Law Book of Manu (xii. 38), tamas is characterised by desire, rajas by ambition and sattva by justice.

According to the Samkhya school of thought things are

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12. Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 36.
13. Cf. S. Gnana Prakasar, *Philosophical Saivism or Saiva-Siddhanta*, Jaffna, 1917, p; 13.
14. Mbh. Aswamedhaparva, *opus cit.*, p. 96·
15. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. ii., p. 262.
16. E. W. Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, p. 398.
17. Cf. R. Zaehner. *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*, London 1961. p. 107.

always produced and never created. Production is manifestation and destruction non-manifestation. These two depend on the presence and absence of counteracting forces. A thing is manifested when the impediments are removed. It is sattva that manifests itself; tamas is the resistance to be overcome, and rajas represents the force by which the impediments are removed. All things are composed of the three gunãs and the difference of the world objects are traced to the predominance of different gunãs. In material things at rest tamas is predominant, while sattva and rajas are subordinate; in things in motion rajas is predominant, while the others are latent. We read in Mahabhãrata: "The day should be understood as threefold; the night has been ordained to be three fold...three fold are the worlds; three fold the deities; three fold is knowledge; three fold the path or end...... The three qualities act by turn in all things and in all circumstances. The creation of those three, viz., goodness, passion and darkness is eternal.[18] These three fundamental principles have been later identified with the three forms or aspects of the Supreme.[19]

The Bhagavata Sect and its Influence on the Idea of Trimûrti.

The immediate step towards the idea of the divine Triad came out from that theistic sect of the Bhagavata which flourished in the fifth century B. C.

Leaving behind the philosophical ideas about the Supreme Being the popular religion began to show progress. The masses were in search of an adorable or worshipful being, a God who is more personal. We see the gradual emerging of a monotheistic religion.

In the Narayaniya of Mahabhãrata, the great Narayana manifests himself as the Supreme Soul. He can be seen only by one who worships him with loving devotion. The Supreme reveals Himself and explains to the sage Narada, the religion of Vasudeva with his three forms (vyuhas).[20] He also mentions the future

18. *Mbh. Aswamedha Parva, opus cit.*, p. 96.
19. C. B. Papali, vol. ii., p. 183.
20. Viuha (Vyuha) = Shifting, displacement; military array; aggregate, host, multitude; Purushotama's quaternity as Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Anirudha (Cf. A. A. Macdonell, *Practical S. Dict.* p. 304). Here it signifies 'emanation', see, B. Kumarappa, *Hindu Concept of Deity*, London, 1934, p. 91.

incarnations of Vasudeva, and the avatar of Krishna is one of them. The different forms of the one God and the need for loving devotion—Bhakti—for the understanding of the Supreme, were established in the religion of Vasudeva. But this religion has been later followed by Satvatas.

In the Adiparva (218. 12), Vasudeva is called Satvata. Towards the end of the sixty sixth chap. of Bhishmaparvam, Bhisma says: "This eternal God, mysterious, beneficient and loving should be known as Vasudeva, and Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras worship him by their devoted action!"

The identification of Narayana with Vasudeva and of them in turn with Vishnu which happened in the course of a long period of time is of great importance. For each one of these gods was considered for a while to be Supreme by his own followers.

In the purãnic times, the cult of Vasudeva decreased and three streams of religious thought, namely, the one flowing from Vishnu, the vedic God at its source, another from Narayana, the cosmic and philosophical God, and the third from Vasudeva, the historical God, mingled together forming the later Vaishnavism.[21]

Men of this time called their god Bhagavat, his devotee being a Bhagavata and the personal love and devotion which he has elicited is called Bhakti. Bhagavata is also called as 'Pancaratra'.[22] In the BG. (vii. 19) it is stated that, "at the end of many lives, the man of wisdom resorts to Me. knowing that Vasudeva (the Supreme) is all that is". The doctrines of the Bhagavata can be traced to the Purusha Sukta of the Rigveda (RV. x. 90), whereas according to the Satapatha Brahmana (xiii. 6. 1), Narãyana, the

21. Cf. Ramkrshna Gopal Bhandarkar, *opus cit.*, p. 45.
22. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality......opus cit.*, p. 394; George Thibaut, *The Vedanta Sutras, SBE.* vol. xxxiv, p. xxii. The antiquity of the cult of Vasudeva can be easily asserted from archeological investigations. An inscription on a column at Besnagar in central India, which dates back to the second cent. B. C., so reads: This Garuda column of Vasudeva, the God of gods (Deva deva) was erected here by Heliodorus, a Bhagavata, the son of Dion, and an inhabitant of Taxila, who came as Greek ambassador from Maharaja Antialkidas to king Kasiputra Bhagbhadra' (Cf. Jack Finegan, *opus cit.*, p. 147). These words are specially significant since they show that, contrary to later practice, an alien could at this time be accepted as a worshipper within the field of Hindu society.

great being, performed the purusha—medha sacrifice (human sacrifice) to overpass all beings. There Narãyana was considered to be the Highest divinity, with all other gods including Brahmã, Vishnu and Siva in subordination to him.

The Theory of Vyuha explained.

The Bhagavata view admits that God is both the efficient and the material cause. They say that the one holy (bhagavat) Vasudeva, whose nature is pure knowledge, is he who really exists, and that he, dividing himself fourfold, appears in four forms (vyuha), Vasudeva, Samkarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Vasudeva is the highest and absolute self, who as a causal essence produces the three effects as individual soul, mind and egoity, representing the three persons respectively.[23] The different forms of Vasudeva points to the manifold forms adopted by the Supreme Being. In the CH. Up. we read: He is One, becomes threefold, five fold, sevenfold and also nine fold. Then again, he is called elevenfold, also a hundred and eleven fold and also twenty thousand fold (Ch. Up. vii. 26. 2). The deity assumes these forms so that he may be worshipped in all these forms. The great philosopher Sankara disagree with the Bhagavata theory of the vyuha.[24] But Ramanuja speaks with approval of this doctrine commenting on Vedanta Sutra [25] II. 40-43. He states that by the 'Vyuhas', we

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23. Cf. George Thibaut, *Vedanta Sutras, SBE, vol.* xxxiv, p. 440.
24. Sankara does not agree with the theory that Samkarsana springs from Pradyumna. For it is not possible that from Vasudeva, i.e., the Highest Self, there should originate Samkarsana, i.e. individual souls; for if such were the case, there would attach to the soul non-permanency, and all the other imperfections which belong to things originated (Cf. George *Thibaut, opus cit.*, p. 441; S. Radhakrishnan, *Brahma Sutra, opus cit.*, pp. 393-394).
25. Sutras signify short aphorisms, constituting in their totality a complete body of doctrine upon some subject. We have seen the Hindu literature (Sruti) divided into Vedas, Brahmanas, Arnyakas and upanishads. These vedic texts have been interpreted by various commentators. The commentaries generally confine themselves to explaining the meaning of each detached passage, without investigating its relation to other passages and the whole of which they form part. The task of taking a comprehensive view of the contents of these texts as a whole, in a systematic way is allotted to a separate *Sastra* or body of doctrine which is termed *Mimamsa* i.e., investigation or enquiry—an enquiry into the connected meaning of the

have to understand the fourfold arrangement or division of the highest Reality as Vasudeva, Samkarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, and that by 'worship of the vyuha one attains the 'subtle' called Vasudeva, i.e., the highest Brahman. Samkarsana, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha are thus mere bodily forms which the highest Brahman voluntarily assumes.[26]

Thus we see that the Divine has many modes of manifestation, in different levels and the fulfilment of the purposes of these modes will surely constitute the supreme scope of the eternal kingdom. Everything proceeds from the One being who is supreme with definite aims.

Earlier we have dealt with the Samkhya system of philosophical thought. From the theological point that system is strangely taken up into the Bhagavata faith by the equation of the four Vyuhas to the four principles of Samkhya[27] —Purusha and the prakriti with its three distinguishing gunãs. The wise man reaches the unity with the highest by the way of return through Aniruddha, pradyumna and Samkarsana to Vasudeva.

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sacred texts. Mimamsa is divided into the earlier (purva) and later (uttara) mimamsa. The former tries to systematize the karma kanda, i.e., that entire portion of the veda which is concerned with action, pre-eminently sacrificial action, and which comprises the samhitas and the Brahmanas exclusive of the Aranyaka portions; the latter treats the gnana kanda part, which comprises the vedic writings which includes the Aranyaka portions of the Brahmanas and upanishads. Its subject is not action, but knowledge. At present there exists a vast literature connected with the two branches of the Mimamsa. One group that constitutes the purva mimamsa sastra or simply Mimamsa sastra, and the other set of works that come under the name Vedanta Sastra. At the head of this extensive literature there stand two collections of Sastras, whose reputed authors are Jaimini and Badarayana. 'The Sutras in which the Gnanakanda of the veda is systematized go by various names, being called either Vedanta-Sutras, or uttara Mimamsa-Sutras, or Brahma sutras, or Saririka Mimamsa sutras. (Cf. George Thibaut, *Vedanta Sutras, SBE.* vol. xxxiv. p. xiv, note). ....

26. Cf. B. Kumarappa, *The Hindu Conception of Deity*, p. 312. According to Ramanuja, the Supreme assumes these forms for convenience of worship, and for purposes such as creation, etc. Of these Vasudeva is possessed of six qualities; Samkarsana has two, viz. omniscience and sustaining power; Pradyumna two, viz. controlling power and unchangeableness; and Anirudha, creative power and all overcoming prawess. Cf. R. G. Bhandarkar, *opus cit.*, p. 75.
27. Cf. A. B. Keith, *The Samkhya System*, 2nd ed. London, 1924, p. 40.

These three forms of the Supreme Vasudeva came to be considered respectively as in charge of creation, preservation and destruction corresponding to the three gunās.

This doctrine of the Bhagavata sect known as Ekanta dharma (religion of undivided love) served as a ferment for the popular Hinduism in its future development. With this study of the Samkhya and Bhagavata theories we shall examine our theme of Trimûrti.

Trimûrti in the Maitiri Upanishad

Maitiri or Maitrayana-Brahmana Up. speaks explicitly of the divine Triad of Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva. Prof. Max Müller ascribes this Up. to an early period, possibly to an ante-paninian period.[28]

We read: Now then this is Kutsayana's hymn of praise. "Thou art Brahmā and verily thou art Vishnu, thou art Rudra, and thou Prajāpati. Thou art Agni, Varuna, Vayu. Thou art Indra and thou art the moon......All things exist in thee in many forms for their own or for their natural ends. Lord of the universe, salutation to thee..."[29]

We see here the Supreme, saluted in his different personal names. All the important gods are mentioned here. Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva are seen close together. The Supreme is identified with each and everyone of them.

We read again: 'Verily in the beginning this (world) was darkness alone. That was in the highest. When impelled by the Highest it moves on to differentiation. That form, Verily is passion. That passion, when impelled, moves on to differentiation. That verily is the form of goodness. That goodness, when impelled, the essence came forth. That part is what the intelligence principle in every person is, the knower of the body, which has the marks of conception, determination and self love, Prajāpati (the lord of creation) called Visva...That part of him which is characterised by darkness that, O students of sacred knowledge, is this Rudra (Siva). Now then, indeed, that part of him which is characterised by passion, that, O students of sacred

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28. Cf. Max Müller, *The Upanishads, SBE.* vol. xv. p. 1. R.C. Zaehner declares that Maitiri is the latest of all the classical upanishads (Cf. *Hinduism,* p. 63).
29. *Mai Up.* v. 1.

knowledge, is Brahmã. Now then, indeed, that part of him which is characterised by goodness, that, O students of knowledge, is this Vishnu. Verily, that one becomes three fold..."[30]

The unification of the three principal gods in the form of a triad is perfectly achieved in the above passage of the upanishad. This attempt is better understood in the background of the theories of Samkhya and Bhagavata. The Supreme is represented as prajãpati who manifests himself in three or more distinct persons, accordingly as they assume different qualities. The relation of the three forms (mûrtitraya) to the supreme is here indicated. The chief object is to show that there is only one thinking self (Cidatma) to be known, and that the same is to be meditated on as manifested in the different forms of Rudra, Brahmã, Vishnu, etc. So the three members of the Divine Triad are not conceived as independent persons; instead, they are the threefold manifestations of the one supreme. In the 6th chapter[31] of this Upanishad, the different manifestations of the Supreme are well delineated. We read: 'This *aum* is the sound form of this (the self). Feminine, masculine and neuter (this) is the sex form. Fire, wind and sun; this is the light form. Brahmâ, Rudra and Vishnu, this is his lordship form...Earth, atmosphere and sky, this is his world form. Past, present and future, this is his time form. Breath, fire and sun, this is his growth form...'[32] In the manifold forms adopted by the Being for the creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe, the triad consisting of the gods Brahmã, Vishnu and Siva, form only a part. It is in these forms that the Supreme, lord over the universe. We see here the manifold phenomenas and the various elements in the nature we often meet with, and the important deities behind all. Meditating upon the world of experience the seer did not find himself in an utterly confused state, with regard to the plurality of gods. Instead, it led him to the conception of one God, One Absolute Spirit, of whom the plurality of gods are only manifestations.[33]

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30. *Mai. Up.* v. 2.
31. The last sixth and seventh chapters of this upanishad are of later addition (Cf. Max Müller, *The Upanishads,* SBE. xv. p. clvi).
32. *Mait. Up.* vi. 5.
33. Cf. The Hindu Conception of Devata, in *Discourses on Hindu Spiritual culture*, A. K. Banerjee, Delhi, 1967, pp. 142-156.

The Idea of Manifestations explained.

The ultimate reality is considered to be dynamic, whose essential character is to manifest the inexhaustible glory and beauty of His nature in and through numberless orders of creations. Are these manifestations compatible with the absolute nature of the Reality? A real conception of personality alone can supply adequate positive meaning to those ideas of God as Infinite, Eternal, Absolute, etc. A. K. Banerjee writes: "A positively infinite being is one, of whom all finite existences are self-manifestations, in whom all finite existences exist, who is the one self of all finite existences, from whom all finite existences are substantially non different. All the finite existences being from Him, in Him, for Him, do not limit Him, in any way."[34] The Supreme is the sole ground and substratum of all relativities, because all relative existences are His own self-manifestations. He is absolutely free in these self-manifestations in time, space and relativity. He is not forced to manifest Himself in such diversities by any power or law extrinsic to himself. The modes and laws of this action are wholly determined by himself, by His own will, which is indistinguishable from His perfect blissful nature. His creative work is not preceded by any sense of want or imperfection or unrealized ideal. His desire for self manifestation as a universe of finite 'transitory' relative beings does not arise in his mind at any particular point of time or any particular stage of His life history. His will, his impulse to creation and continuation of a world of plurality, constitutes his eternal nature and is identical with His character of self-enjoyment and is appropriately described as His *leela* or sport. His creation is without any beginning and without any end. He is eternally creative, eternally playful, eternally self-enjoying. He is not first God and then the creator of the universe; but it is as God that He is the creator of the universe, creatorship being in His nature.[35]

The tendency for the manifestation of the one self is clearly expressed in the Katha upanishad. The Absolute appears in various forms in order to satisfy the desires of many, by being

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34. A. K. Banerjee, *opus cit.,* p. 193.
35. The creation is sometimes described as the lila, the sport of Brahman, who creates the universe out of sheer sportive pleasure from the very fullness of his nature. Cf. S. Nikhilananda, *opus cit.,* p. 41.

more near to them all. "The one controller (of all)", we read, "the inner self of all things, who makes his one form manifold to the wise who perceive him as abiding in the soul, to them is eternal bliss—to no others.[36] Yet Radhakrishnan says that, when the Supreme assumes different forms they are not to be considered as His modifications, but as the manifestations of His possibilities.[37]

Result of a compromise.

We have seen the origin and progressive development of the three gods which constitute the Divine Triad. It is true that at the disappearance of the chief vedic gods, Brahmã, Vishnu and Siva came to be represented close together in the group of gods. But this nearness in representations cannot in any way argue for their being one. It was the period of the epics and the purãnas. In the popular beliefs Vishnu and Siva were considered to be responsible for all the three main functions regarding the universe, they being the supreme gods. As Brahmã, the successor of Prajãpati, did not have any sect, He claimed only few adherents. But the other two sects, instead of showing any sign of union, began to fight each other for superiority. It was at this time that the Buddhists also began to flourish. The views of Buddhism were in opposition to the brahmanic views of the orthodox Hindus. There was an attempt among the Buddhists even to form a trinity consisting of Buddha, Vishnu and Siva, which they tried to express in their paintings.[38] At this time it was necessary for the Hindus to defend their religion from being degenerated. And in such an attempt of self-defence, an artificial union of the three gods was made, which resulted into the famous Trimûrti. "The Hindu Triad represents", says R.N. Dandekar, "an attempt to bring about a religious synthesis between Vaishnavism and Saivism on the one hand, and between those two popular religious movements and Brahmanism on the other. With their usual fondness of schematising, the Brahmans regarded Brahmã, Vishnu and Siva as the representatives of the

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36. *Kath. Up.* ii. 2. 12, 13.
37. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads,* p. 640.
38. Cf. C. B. Papali, *vol. ii.,* p. 182,

creative, preservative and destructive principles and as the embodiments of the gunãs, rajas, sattva and tamas respectively."[39]

The comparative lateness and esoteric character of the doctrine of Trimûrti is shown by the almost total absence of its conception in the epics where it appears definitely only in one statement of Mahabhãrata. "Having the form of Brahmã he creates; having a human body (as Krishna-Vishnu) he protects, in the nature of Siva, he would destroy-these are the three appearences or conditions (avasthas) of the Father God, Prajãpati" (Mbh. iii. 271. 47). Here Prajãpati, the Brahmanic Father God is made the Supreme One. Even though all the three deities are presented in the epic, Vishnu, in the form of Krishna or Vasudeva is supereminently extolled.

Internal Value of this Union

Eventhough to each one of these three gods distinct functions are assigned, each of them is of a complex character. The conception of their relationship is not constantly uniform. As a matter of fact the prayers addressed and the attributes assigned to each one of them have in themselves the necessary elements for a unified character. The sentiments expressed by Kalidasa may be taken as the best possible passage expressive of Trimûrti,

'In these three persons the one God was shown,
Each first in place, each last,—not one alone;
O Siva, Vishnu, Brahmã, each may be
First, second, third, among the Blessed three.[40]

39. R. N. Dandekar, *Cultural Heritage of India,* vol. ii. p. 235; prof. M. Williams points out to the formation of a Trinity from another source, contemporaneous with the progress of the Buddhistic movement. He says that the vedic Agni, the personification of creative heat, with a little extension of his attributes and functions, passed into the God Brahmâ, while the Sun-god Vishnu and the storm God Rudra, with a slight change in their functions, but without change in their names, became world-upholder and world-dissolver (Cf. M. Williams, *Hinduism,* London, 1894, p. 89).

40. 'Ekaiva Murti vibhide Tridha sa samanyamesham Pradhamavaratvam Vishnoharasthasya hari kadachid. Vedyasthayosthavapi dhathuradyou' (*Kumara Sambhavam,* vii. 44) English trans. by C. B. Papali, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II,* vol. iii, New York, 1969, p. 142.

The Mythological Source

There are no means available to infer who was the first to harmonise the three gods into a unity representing one composed form of Trimûrti.[41] But purãnic mythology has to say something even in this matter. It is stated that the Trimûrti sprang from a female source called Adisakti (original power), who gave birth to these three divinities, united in a single body. After having brought them forth, she fell desperately in love with them and married them.[42] The ingenious plan of this unification has the advantage that it is without prejudice to the religion of any of the gods concerned.

In this union of gods both mythology and philosophy join together. The three members of the Trinity are subordinate to the supreme Being, or Param Brahma, whom the Vaishnavas identify with Vishnu in his highest phase Para Vasudeva, and distinguish from his lower phase, the Vishnu of this unity; while the Saivas draw a corresponding distinction between Paramasiva, the God Siva in His transcendent nature, and the Siva who figures in the Trimûrti.

Trimûrti in the Purãnas

The idea of Trimûrti has its full development in the purãnic works in which the sectarian deities are specially glorified.[43]

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41. Cf. Leonel D. Barnett, *Hindu gods and heroes*, London, 1922, p. 113.
42. Cf. Abbe J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners* ......p. 543.
43. The word Purâna originally means 'ancient' or 'old narrative'; but long before the beginning of the Christian era it came also to be used as the designation of a class of books dealing, among other matters, with old—world stories and legends. They expound ancient Indian theogany, cosmogony, geneologies, and account of kings and Rsis, religious belief, worship, observances and opinions about all kinds of miscellaneous matters. As the extensive Purâna literature handed down to posterity included both early and late, as well as major and minor works, the distinguishing class name 'mahapurâna' was given to the major and important works. They are eighteen in number. They vary in length and content. They often refer to several gods, but generally each purâna is devoted to the praise and glorification of one deity only. Six of them relate Vishnu, and in them the quality (gunâ) of sattva prevails; six are devoted to Siva, with tamas prevailing; and six to Brahmâ with the rajas quality. It is difficult to ascertain the exact time when purânas originated. The first mention of them is found in

These works played an important part in the racial and religious unification of the different people of India. In their synthetic way of procedure, they succeeded in reconciling the various religious beliefs, the Samkhya system and the Vedantic philosophy. 'It is the purãnas', observes R. C. Hazra, 'which have brought about unity in diversity and taught religious toleration to the followers of different faiths by making them realise that God is one, though called in different names.'[44]

Vishnu appears as Trimûrti

We have seen that it was the supreme Brahman who manifested himself in the three gods of the Trimûrti. But with the purãnas we see the sectarian gods being worshipped as Supreme, who in their turn manifested themselves as the three gods forming the Divine Triad.[45] The wonderful but irrational adventures which the sage Markandeya had with the Lord, during the interval of non-manifestation between the dissolution and recreation of the universe, point out to this fact.[46]

Markandeya, by a miraculous and curious accident, beholds Vishnu in a series of archetypal transformations: first, under the elemental guise of the cosmic ocean, then as a giant reclining on

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the Atharva Veda (AV. x. xi. 24), where it is said that they are of the ucchishta (residue) of sacrifice. The Br. Up. (ii. 4. 10) on the other hand ascribes the origin of the four vedas, itihasas, purânas, etc., to the breath of the Great Being, the Supreme Soul. Every genuine purâna is supposed to contain five characteristic marks: (i) Sarga (creation or evolution) of the universe from its natural Source, (ii) Pratisarga—recreation of the universe from its constituent elements after its being destroyed at the close of a day in the life of Brahmâ (iii) Vanisa—geneologies of gods, demons, patriarchs; sages and kings, (iv) Manvantara—cosmic cycles, each of which is ruled over by a *manu*, the first father of mankind and (v) vamsanukarita—accounts of royal dynasties (Cf. *ECE. Art. on purana;* Benjamin Walker, *Hindu World, An Encyclopaedic Survey of Hinduism,* 2 vol., London, 1968; *The cultural Heritage of India,* vol, ii., p. 240, 241).

44. R. C. Hazra, *Cultural Heritage of India,* vol. ii., p. 245.

45. P. Johannes S.J. writes: Vishnu reveals himself, in three subordinate forms. He is the supreme-God, but in order to create the world he appears as Brahmâ, in order to preserve the world as Vishnu (a subordinate form of the supreme Vishnu) and in order to destroy as Siva (Cf. Johannes, *Hinduism,* London, 1958, p. 11).

46. *Mat.* p—CLXVII. 13-25. Cf. Heinrich Zimmer, *opus cit.,* p. 47.

the waters; again, as a divine child, alone at play beneath the cosmic tree; and finally as a majestic wild gander, the sound of whose breathing is the magic melody of the creation and destruction of the world. The child Vishnu tells the sage: 'I am the holy order (dharma), I am the growing fervour of ascetic endeavour (tapas). I am all those appearances and virtues through which the true essence of existence manifests itself. I am the Lord-Creator-and Generator-of all beings (i.e., Prajãpati), the order of the sacrificial ritual, and I am called the Lord of Sacred Wisdom...I am the primeval being and the Supreme refuge. From me originates what ever has been, shall be or is... Brahmã lives in my body and all the gods and the holy seers. Know me as Him who manifests, yet whose manifesting magic remains unmanifested and not to be grasped..."

It would suffice one more text to confirm the manifesting nature of Vishnu forming the triad of gods. In the padma purãna we read: "In the beginning of creation, the great Vishnu, desirous of creating the whole world, became three fold-creator, preserver and destroyer. In order to create the world the supreme spirit produced from the right side of his body, himself as Brahmã; then in order to preserve the world he produced from the left side of his body Vishnu, and in order to destroy the world, he produced from the middle of his body the eternal Siva. Some worship Brahmã, others Vishnu, others Siva, but Vishnu, one yet three fold, creates, preserves and destroys. Therefore let the pious make no difference between the three.[47] Once even Brahmã himself is seen declaring that himself, Siva, and the other Gods are no more than a portion of Vishnu. In the Vishnu purana he tells the celestial beings: 'O ye celestials! Myself, Siva and you all beings—are no more than a portion of Vishnu.'[48]

Brahmã forms the Trimûrti

It is the poet Kalidasa who gives this great praise to Brahmã. In the *Kumara Sambhava* the gods pray before Brahma,

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47. John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature.,* London, 1928, p. 320.
48. Cf. H. Zimmer, p. 80. Here it does not mean that these two principal gods are avatars or incarnations of Vishnu, for they are not included in the Vishnu Avatars as we have seen in the third chapter.

'Glory to Thee! before the world was made,
One single form thy Majesty displayed
Next Thou, to body forth the mystic Three
Didst fill three persons: Glory, Lord, to Thee!
....
Before thy triple form in awe they bow:
Maker, preserver and destroyer, Thou![49]

Siva Trimûrti

More than the other two, Siva becomes the embodiment of the Hindu Trinity. The three-headed bust of the God of the VIII cent. A. D. found in the subterranean rock-cut temple of Elephanta, near Bombay, is one of the most significant documents of Trimûrti. In this figure Siva seems to have absorbed into himself the other two deities.[50] The entire carving, including the base, shoulders and triune head, is about twenty feet in height. But the authors do not agree in describing this sculpture of Trimûrti. Monier Williams and Murray Mitchell tell that the head at the centre represents Brahmã, while Vishnu is on the right and Siva on the left.[51] J. Gonda and Heinrich Zimmer see in it the manifestation of Siva into three forms. But in their explanation of the figure, they differ both among themselves and also from the other two authors above. According to the former the triple activity of Siva in his three different forms is represented in this way. Siva, the absolute and transcendent God is in the centre, while Siva the destroyer in his Bhirava form is on the right, and the Siva of grace and love, as Uma, is on the left.[52]

H. Zimmer gives another explanation of the same Trimûrti

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49. Namas trimurtiye thubhyam prak srushtte: Kevalâtmane Gunathraya vibhagaya paschabde damupeyushe yadamokhamapamantharuptam bijamaja thvaya srushcharacharam vishvam prabhavasthasya giyase.
Ku. Sam. II. 4-7. Published by S. R. Seghal, *Kalidasa's Kumara-Sambhava,* opus cit., (English Trans. is by T.H. Griffith, in the same book).

50. Cf. J. Murray Mitchell, *Hinduism Past and Present,* 1885, London, p. 136.

51. Cf. M. Williams, *Brahmanism and*......p. 45 and J. Murray Mitchell, *opus cit.,* p. 136.

52. J. Gonda, *Les Religions De L'Inde,* vol. i, (Trad. L. Jospin), Paris, 1962, p. 312.

figure. In his view it represents precisely the mystery of the unfolding of the Absolute into the dualities of phenomenal existences which fact is personified and culminated in human experience by the polarity of the female and the male. The middle head is a representation of the Absolute. Majestic and sublime, it is the divine essence out of which proceed the other two. Over the right shoulder of this presence, perpetually growing out of this form is the male profile of Siva, the Great God (Maha-Deva). Virility, will power, etc., due to a great person are exhibited in this figure. Corresponding to the left of the central mask is the profile of the female principle—ineffable attractiveness, the seductive power of nature, gentle charm, swelling with the promise of all sweetness. Heinrich Zimmer depicts it in a dramatic way: "But the middle head is self-inclosed in a sublime, dreamy aloofness. By its impassivity it silences the two gestures to right and to left, ignoring completely the display of their antagonistic features...As an immovable, massive, central form, magnificent, self-absorbed in lofty and stony silence, it (the central head) overpowers, dissolves and fuses into itself the characteristic features of the two lateral physiognomies: power and sweetness, aggressive vigour and expectant receptivity. Great with transcendental quietude, comprehensive, enigmatic, it subsumes them and annihilates in eternal rest the effects of their creative tension...Apparantly it never feels the joys and agonies of their interaction. The central head is the face of Eternity. Insisting on nothing whatsoever, it contains, blended in transcendental harmony, all the powers of the paired existences to either side. Out of its solid silence time and the life process are continually flowing—or nothing flowing.' According to the author the two lateral figures stand for the 'happening'. But, the central mask is meant to express the truth of the Eternal in which nothing happens, nothing comes to pass, changes or dissolves again. The divine essence, the solely real, the Absolute in itself, our own innermost Higher Self, abides in itself, steeped in its own sublime void, omniscient and omnipotent, containing all and everything. This is the portrait of Atman-Brahman. And here is the paradox of Māyā: the universe of our personalities are as real as—but not more real than—the phenomenal apparitions of these male and female profiles, emerging from the centre, but ignored by it. Brahman and Māyā co-exist. Māyā is the continuous self-manifestation and self disguise of Brahman—its self

revelation, yet its multi-coloured, concealing veil. Hence the dignity of all perishable things, on all levels."[53]

Conclusion

The ability of Hinduism to receive into its embrace any system or belief is remarkable. In principle their religion does not advocate any rivalry against other religions, or even against the different sects of the same religion, even though there were exceptions in the course of history.

The idea of uniting the three Gods into a Triad also sprang up from such a spirit of cohabitation. Examining the essential ideas, sentiments and practices of the different religious systems, that pass by the name of Hinduism, from different angles, one will find that inspite of all the diversities there is an unmistakable bond of unity through them. One common feature of all Hindu sects is their undying faith in the Vedas, believed to be revealed by God Himself to the earliest ancestors of mankind, with a view to lead the human soul to its final blissful destiny. Also, it is to be noted that in the heart of an ordinary unsophisticated believer, a remarkable amalgamation has always taken place. In his mind there is no dogmatism about any theological doctrine. Everyone believes in a general way that there is only one God, who is the creator, sustainer, ruler and destroyer of the world, from whom everything has come, in whom everything exists and to whom everything returns after its worldly career. He is fully aware of the oneness of this Supreme, who is all in all.

Still this conviction of the All-God does not hinter him from offering worship to a variety of deities. A true believer finds no inconsistency between the conception of and self-surrender to one immanent and transcendent God and the homage to and worship of many particular Gods, because in the innermost core of his heart he knows that all these gods represent particular aspects of the infinite power and unfathomable greatness of the one undivided, unconditioned absolute God.[54]

The Sectarian Hindus such as those whose Creed is to worship the One absolute God in the particular name and form of Siva,

53. H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*......pp. 148-151.
54. A. K. Banerjee, *opus cit.*, p. 34.

Vishnu. Kali (consort of Siva, or his power) or to adopt a particular mode of religious discipline, may readily offer worship, without being unfaithful to their creed, or to other deities whom they regard as partial manifestations of their own highest object of worship.[55]

Thus we find that in Trimûrti, the three principal gods, who have a common source, again assemble together for an oecumenical life, though the plan did not succeed well.

55. It is worth while to note here a conversation which prof. Monier Williams had with a Brahmin, at Thana, near Bombay. To the professor's question regarding the plurality of gods, the Brahmin thus answered: All Orthodox Hindus believe in one universal spirit who becomes supreme lord over all (Paramêswara). At the same time they believe that this one God has taken various forms, all of which may be worshipped, just as gold is one every where though it may take different forms and names in different places and countries. Every one chooses his favourite form of the deity. They call him Agni-Narayana. Vedic Brahmans make a God of the veda, calling it Veda-Narayana. Differing places have also their favourite presiding deities. Banares is especially watched over by a form of Siva (Called Visvêswara); Pandharpur, by a form of Krishna (called Vithoba). Here in Thana we have temples of Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Viththal, Hanuman, Siva, Ganesa and Devi. The oldest and most sacred of all is one of Siva, in the character of Kaupineswara. We may propitiate every one of them with ceremonies and sacrifices, but the Supreme Being present in all these gods is the real object of all our offerings and religious services. At the end of each we say, "By this act may the Supreme Lord be gratified"………Even the Rig-Veda asserts that the gods are one being under different forms (RV. 1. 164, viii. 58. 2). (Cf. M. Williams, *Brahmanism and………opus cit.*, p. 50).

CHAPTER VI

A) An Evaluation of the Study

Our present task is an evaluation of the study of the Hindu concept of a trinitarian God, comparing it with the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Comparisons are not always without any prejudice or presumption. Usually it is done to the detriment of the faith of the other. Still, R. C. Zaehner says that the Europeans might say, "......In our time new enrichment is coming to the West from India and, since the Indian tradition is so much more religious than the Greek, it is more natural for us to look for religious kinship not so much among the Greeks as among the nations of Asia, for it is Asia that is the birth place of every single religion that has withstood the test of time".[1]

Even juxtaposing the Hindu and Christian teachings will not serve our purpose perfectly. Still it will help in a way to understand how themes of life, God and eternity took their development in both religions in their proper ways of growth. In order to understand, at least in a very general way, the idea of Trimûrti in the Hindu religion, we have started from the very early Hindu scriptures. The quest of the Indian to find out the Absolute Cause behind the perceptible phenomena around him is seen from the very beginning. We must here note, as Mircea Eliade suggests, that almost everywhere the religious phenomena are complex, suggesting a long historical evolution.[2] The long and persevering search of the Indian after the Deity, which he expresses through the philosophico-theological treatises also speak

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1. R. C. Zaehner, At Sundry Times, pp. 165ff., quoted by Geoffrey Parrinder, *Upanishad, Gita, and Bible*, London, 1962, p. 12.
2. Cf., Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in...*, *opus cit.*, p. 1. Authors are not lacking who consider that even the dogma of the Trinity of God, the Father, Son and Spirit, is not a revealed one, but has been produced under the action of the very same spirit working in ancient religions. Cf. Jules Lebreton, *Les Origines du Dogme de la Trinite,* Paris. 1910, a foot note on p. 9, quoted from H. Usener, *Dreiheit, dans 'Rheinishes Museum fur philologie,* (1903. LVIII. p. 36-37).

the same. Most often they ascribed this power to any one of the gods they met with. Vedic gods like Varuna-the sovran God, Indra-the great warrior God, Surya-the Sun god, and Agni-the fire God, became important in this way. In their way to praising or appeasing these gods, the Vedic people went beyond every possible way of exaggeration. To the suppliant each God was found to be as good as all other gods.[3] In that undeveloped stage of religion, it was quite natural that they did not delve deep either into the inner nature of or into an I-Thou relationship with, the Mighty. So the grand natural objects like sky, earth, Sun etc., even though regarded as deities, were naturally called by names denoting their external characteristics, rather than by their appellations descriptive of the divine attributes, they possessed.[4]

We have seen that in the course of the rationalization of early Brahmanism a "father god", Prajãpati, had been postulated as reigning over the many functional gods of the world. He was followed by Brahmã, who, as has been justly observed, was often treated as identical with Prajãpati. But even then as later, he was conceived to be an inactive god.[5] He lost ground when sectarian gods like Vishnu and Siva gained momentum.

God's Intervention in the Events of History

The Old Testament speaks how God revealed Himself, by words and deeds, interfering in the life and history of Israel. It was really a journey of God with man through the centuries.[6]

The idea of history which Israel developed theologically in different directions over a period of many centuries is of particular importance.[7] It is something which is entirely absent in the

3. Ref. Chap. I, note no. 23, which speaks on Henotheism.
4. J. Muir, *Sanskrit Texts, vol. v,* p. 414, quoted by prof. Maxmüller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion, as illustrated by the Religions of India,* London, 1891, p. 264.
5. Cf. Max Weber, *The Religion of India,* (Trans. by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale, New York, 1968, p. 173.
6. Cf. Peter F. Ellis, C. S. S. R., *The Men and Message of the Old Testament, Minnesota,* 1963, p. xii.
7. They were the saving events of God in their history (for example, Exodus), that the chosen people changed in the long run into the cultic festivals (Cf. Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology.,* vol. ii, Edinburg, 1970, pp. 107-108).

Hindu religious thought. This absence of the concept of history is very fundamental in the understanding of the Hindu Deities from the very beginning till our own days. Even though we have discussed the different avatars of God on different occasions, we could never come across a single event, where it is said that God has interfered in such a particular moment of human history for the salvation of mankind. Instead we are told that God incarnates Himself, whenever He finds it a necessity. So God is eternally incarnating Himself (Cf. BG. iv. 7-8).[8] In this respect some of the exponents of the Vedantic doctrine, included Christ also as one among the avatars. To them the historicity of Jesus and His personality are accidents, and so should be held as the non-essential part of the Gospel of Christ. Sri Ramakrishna[9] once said, "It is one and the same Avatāra that, having plunged into the ocean of life, rises up in one place and is known as Krishna; and diving again rises in another place and is known as Christ.[10] And for Vivekananda, Christ also appears a number of times, just like Krishna. He says 'In time to come Christs will be in numbers like bunches of grapes on a wine; then the play will be over and will pass out. As water in a kettle beginning to boil shows first one bubble, then another, then more and more until all is in ebullition and passes out as steam. Buddha and Christ are the two biggest 'bubbles', the world has yet produced. Moses was a tiny bubble, greater ones came. Sometime however, all will be bubbles and escape; but creation, ever anew, will bring new water to go through the process all over again.[11]

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8. The eternal changing in the world in the cycles of creation and destruction also must be taken into consideration here.

9. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886) was priest at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. He went through several disciplines of self-realization and became the centre of a renascence of Hinduism in its own fundamentals. His chief disciple was Vivekananda who later organised the Ramakrishna Mission, a growing missionary movement both in India and elsewhere.

10. Quoted by Max Müller, Ramakrishna, his life and sayings (*collected works*, vol. xv), London, 1900, p. 109 (sayings no. 52).

11. *The Completes works of the Swami Vivekananda,* 6 ed. Calcutta, 1964, vol. vii., pp. 7, 8. The various other Indian systems of thought and religious practices are also indifferent at proclaiming a God who intervened in the History of human race.

The Idea of Mission

Next to history another point to be discussed is the idea of mission. The mystery of the Holy Trinity has been revealed to us through the external Missions of God that have as their purpose Redemption.

What is Mission?

In our context, we understand it in a broader sense, viz., it deals with the sending of a representative of a deity for the purpose of conveying a message or carrying out a task.[12] The whole of Sacred Scripture bears witness to the fact of God's sending his representatives, to convey His message to His chosen people. In the Old Testament this task is entrusted on the one hand to the angels and on the other in a broader sense, to the prophets who announced the will of God (Is. 7. 6-9). All these emissaries only prefigured Christ, who would be sent by His eternal Father in the fullness of time. The theology of the Word, of wisdom and of the Spirit, personifies in a surprising way the divine realities of the S. Scripture and does not hesitate to speak of their mission. God sends His Word in order to carry out His will (Is. 55. 11; Ws. 18. 15ff); He sends His wisdom in order to assist man in His toils (Ws. 9. 10); the Spirit is sent to renew the face of the earth (Ez. 37. 9). These expressions form a prelude to the New Testament where they will be employed to explain the mission of the Son of God who is His Word and His Wisdom, and to clarify the mission of His Holy Spirit in the Church.

'At the origin of the mission there is the free and sublime design of the Father who wants to communicate Himself to men in His Son, by the work of the Holy Spirit, bringing back the universe and the humanity into Him and introducing it in this way to the divine communion in which live the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. The execution of this plan implies the mission of the Son, the incarnated word, and of the Spirit of the Pentecost, destined to remain in the Church for ever and to integrate the world in the mystical body of Christ, for the glory of the

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12. Cf. G. E. Mendenhall, art. on Mission, in *Interpreter's Dict.....* vol. iii., p. 404.

creator and the Father of the whole universe'.[13] "The Son, therefore, came on a mission from the Father";[14] "...The Holy Spirit was sent on the day of pentecost in order that He might for ever sanctify the Church and thus all believers would have access to the Father through Christ in the Spirit".[15]

Christ was always conscious of the mission he received from the Father. He knows His father because he is with Him and because he has been sent by Him (Jn. 7. 29). He points out that it is not of himself that he has gone forth and that he has come, but that his coming is based upon the mission received from the Father (Jn. 8. 42). It is in this conviction of His mission that Christ revealed his mysterious and unique relationship with God, the Father.[16] The Sending of the Son by the Father is found constantly narrated in the fourth Gospel. The Father who has sent Christ has borne witness to him. Christ declares that no one has ever heard His Father, nor has ever seen him (Jn. 5. 37). But we find that there exists such a unity of life between them (Jn. 6. 57) that the attitude one takes with regard to Jesus is the same, one should have with regard to God himself (Jn. 15. 23-24; 12. 24). When the mission entrusted to him would be accomplished, Christ desires to return to the Father (Jn. 7. 33). Through the mission, an essential aspect of the intimate mystery of God is revealed to men: the One True God (Jn. 17. 3, Dt. 6. 4) by sending His Son, revealed Himself as a Father.

In the sending of the Holy Spirit, it can be said that both the Father and the Son co-operate. Jesus says, "But the Consoler, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things (Jn. 14. 26)"; But when the consoler comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me (Jn. 15. 25). The Father and the Son therefore act conjointly in sending the Spirit. Thus in this background of the Divine Mission, is unfolded the mystery of the Godhead; next to Son,

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13 *Costituzione Dogmatica della Chiesa,* publ. by Elle di Ci, p. 509, also cf. Aloys Grillmeier, *Commentary on the Documents of Vat. II,* ed. by Herbert Vorgrimler, vol. i., p. 141.

14. *Lumen Gentium,* no. 3.

15. *Ibidem,* no. 4.

16. Cf. Lucien Cerfaux, *The Christian in the......,*p. 15.

Word and Wisdom of God, the Spirit is in turn manifested as a divine person entering into the history of mankind.

In the triadic concept of God in Hindu religion, as it is presented in its scriptures, the idea of a divine mission is not developed. Still the avatars of Vishnu are to be considered here. A certain condescension is visible in the avatars of Vishnu. Still he does not say in any one of his so called incarnations that he is sent by Brahman, the Absolute, or by any other superior God. For, He Himself is the Absolute (BG. vii. 6, 7; x. 8) Even the theory of Vaishnavite avatar has been the result of a long and complicated process of rationalisation as we have already seen. Vishnu proclaims that it is on his on accord that he incarnates or rather creates himself on earth for the protection of the good, destruction of the wicked and the establishment of righteousness (BG. iv. 7-8). He is not an emissary of the supreme God. Here he himself takes the position of the supreme, and what comes down is not the full Vishnu but only a portion of him (cf. chap. III, p. 71).

Krishna reveals to Arjuna that his avatars or the manifestations in the world are innumerable (BG. x. 40). As regards Siva, and Brahmã, the other two members of Trimûrti, the point of mission is altogether lacking as they never come into personal contact with the humanity. Among them Brahmã does not hold any significant place. Siva is represented in his diverse and contradicting phases; but he is neither one who sends nor one who is sent. Sir. R.G. Bhandarkar says, 'In India the God that is loved is Vishnu-Narayana-Vasudeva-Krishna, while the God that is feared is Rudra-Siva'.[17]

In Relation to Salvation

It may be truly said, in some sense, that salvation is the ultimate concern of all religions. God saves his people. The nature of God could be known, only by means of His revelation of it in action. The view that God is love is not a conclusion reached philosophically after a long process of reflection upon the being and attributes of God; it is the consequence of his self-revelation through his saving action in history (Dt. 7. 8-9).

Here, first of all, let us see, how the Gods of the Hindu

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17. Cf. Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, *opus cit.*, p. 151.

Triad are concerned with the problem of salvation. Radhakrishnan says that, 'it (Hinduism) does not believe in any statutory methods of salvation. Its scheme of salvation is not limited to those who hold a particular view of God's nature and worship. Such an exclusive absolution is inconsistent with an all-loving universal god'.[18]

The concept of salvation is mainly expressed by Vishnu in his avatar as Krishna. Krishna reveals to Arjuna the ways of salvation (ref. chap. III, p. 73). The word salvation is synonymous with liberation, release, mukti, moksha, kaivalya, nirvana etc. 'The concept has a negative as well as a positive side. In its negative aspect it signifies complete freedom from sorrow which is the necessary accompaniment of the transmigratory process; in its positive aspect it stands for the plenary happiness or bliss'.[19] Vishnu-Krishna speaks of both these stages of life. The first one is not a permanent one; having enjoyed the pleasures of the world of heaven one has to return to the world (BG. ix. 20-21). But even to arrive at this first place one must be purified from sin.[20] God will not forsake anybody. He loves every one impartially. 'None is hateful nor dear to Me. But those who worship Me with devotion they are in Me and I also in them' (BG. ix. 29). God is like a loving Father who receives his prodigal son, coming back with repentance. God promises that he will be reckoned as righteous (BG. ix. 30).

He declares that the one who is devoted to him and worship him will achieve his goal (BG. ix. 34).

Three possibilities are proposed regarding life after death. The well known author Max Weber writes: (1) Rebirth to a new temporary life on earth in circumstances at least as fortunate as the present ones; or, what, in contrast to the Christian, is for the Hindu in the same category, rebirth in a paradise; (a) in the world of God (Salokya), or (b) near to God (samipya), or (c) as an apotheosized God (sarupya). Rebirth in the paradise occurs with the same provisions as earthly rebirth, it is for a limited time followed by another rebirth (2) A second possible

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18. S. Radhakrishnan, *Hindu View of Life,* p. 37.
19. Cf. T. M. P. Mahadevan, in the forward to *The Concept of Mukti in the Advaita Vedanta,* by A. G. Krishna Warrier, Madras, 1961, p. v.
20. Cf. S. Nikhilananda, *Hinduism,* p. 23.

holy object is unlimited admission to the blissful presence of a supramundane God (Vishnu), hence immortality of the individual soul in one of the three forms listed above. (3) The third holy object is the cessation of individual existence and (a) mergence of the soul in the all one (sayujya), or (b) submergence in nirvana.[21]

Emancipation or Mukti means, according to the vedantic (advaita), the state of infiniteness, that a man attains when he realises his own self and thus becomes Brahman. According to Swami Vivekananda, Christ also is one who realised Himself as God in his spirit; who then showed others the path to the same spiritual realisation as a messenger.[22] All sufferings and limitations are true only so long as we do not know what our 'self' is.

The state of Mukti is the state of pure and infinite knowledge (anantajnana) and infinite perception (anantadarsana). The Indian systems of thought both orthodox and Heterodox, in their proper way of procedure endeavour to elucidate the practical way of achieving this perfection or liberation.[23] A. Schweitzer

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21. Max Weber, *The Religion of India,* New York, 1968, p. 22; also E. W. Hopkins *The Religions of India,* London, 1896, p. 496.
22. S. Vivekananda says, "He (Christ) had no other occupation in life; no other thought except that one, that he was a Spirit. He was a disembodied, unfettered, unbound spirit. And not only so, but he, with his marvellous vision, had found that every man and woman, whether Jew or Gentile, whether rich or poor, whether saint or sinner, was the embodiment of the same undying Spirit as himself. Therefore, the one work his whole life showed was calling upon them to realise their own spiritual nature...You are all sons of God, Immortal spirit. 'Know' he declared, 'the kingdom of Heaven is within You. I and my Father are one". *The complete works,* vol. iv. pp. 145, 146.
23. Indian philosophy can be rightly grouped under six philosophical schools. They are (1) Nyaya: a system of atomic pluralism and logical realism. It tries to prove the existence of Iswara on the basis of inference (2) Vaisheshika: admits the authority of the Veda and the law of Karma. Even God is guided by the law of Karma, which represents an unseen power. (3) Samhya: It is orthodox as it admits the authority of the Veda. Under the influence of materialism, Jainism and early Buddhism, it became atheistic. For this system Prakriti and Purushas are sufficient to explain the universe and so no God is required. (4) Yoga: Though founded on the metaphysics of Samkhya, admits the existence of God. But the God of Yoga is not the creator, preserver or destroyer of the world. He is only a special purusha. (5) Mimamsa:

writes, "From the start I was convinced that all thought is really concerned with the great problem of how man can attain spiritual union with infinite Being. My attention was drawn to Indian thought because it is busied with this problem and because by its nature it is mysticism".[23a]

What is of importance to us is to see how much the Trimûrti contributed for the attainment of salvation or final bliss. The complete realisation or salvation pertains to the realm of the absolute and impersonal Brahman. The members of the Divine Triad do not act either single or all together for the attainment of such a goal, except, when, each one of them comes to be extolled as the Supreme Lord, as in the case of Vishnu (in Krishna), or Siva (Mahadeva).

Even a survey through the different philosophical systems of Indian thought does not give any rational basis for the formation of the Union of gods. Hopkins suggests that the trinitarian concept of Hindu theology is very distinct from that we find in the teaching of the Christian church. "In India Trinitarianism is merely a condition of things in adjusting the claims of two heterodox sects and orthodoxy, each believer being willing to admit that the god of the other is his own god, only with the understanding that the last is a superior manifestation. In the late Saivism, both Vishnu and Brahma are indeed called the "sons of God" (Siva) but in the sense, that they are distinctly subordinate creatures of Siva.[24]

Saccidananda

We have already seen the notion of Brahman, the Absolute, who is known by the term Saccidananda. The name consists of three words Sat (existence, Reality, Being), Chit (Consciousness or knowledge) and Anandam (Bliss). "He knew that Brahman is bliss. For truly, beings here are born of bliss, when born, they

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Jaimini, the author of the Purva-Mimamsa is silent about the existence of God. As men and animals come in everybody from their parents independent of the action of God, there is no ground to suppose that there is a creator behind all. and (6) The Vedanta.
(24A) Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development,* London, 1956, p. vi.

24. E. W. Hopkins, *opus cit.,* p. 499, (foot note, no. 2).

live in bliss and into bliss, when departing they enter."[25] "He who knows Brahman as the real, as knowledge and as the infinite, placed in the secret place of the heart and in the highest heaven realises all desires with Brahman, placed in the secret place of the heart and in the highest heaven the intelligent.[26] "All the gods worship as the eldest the Brahman, which is understanding (knowledge).[27] Nevertheless it is only in the minor upanishads that the compound term Saccidananda occur as an epithet of Brahman.[28]

But this concept is not in any way directly related to the popular belief in Trimûrti. Trimûrti, as we know is the appearence or manifestation of the supreme God in personal forms, and it is completely distinct from the attributeless Brahman,[29] Now the question arises, to whom the term Saccidananda is applied: to the attributeless (nirguna) Brahman, or to his manifested (Saguna) Brahman? According to some it can be applied to saguna Brahman only as the supreme Brahman can have only negative attributes. The Supreme Brahman is neither being, nor non-being, neither consciousness, nor matter, neither happiness

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25. Tai. Up. iii. 6. 1.
26. *Tai. Up.* ii. 1. 1.
27. *Tai. Up.* ii. 5. 1.
28. Cf. *Nrisimhauttaratapini* Up. vi. 7, in *A Compilation of Well known 120 upanishads,* publ. by the Nirnayasagar press, Bombay, v. ed., "I am purely Sat, Ananda, and Chit, he who is not conditioned and pure. I am the Saccidananda, that is to say the eternally enlightened and pure (Tejo, Up. iii).
29. In the Vishnu Purâna, the teacher parasa identifies the supreme absolute Brahman with Vishnu. He says that Vasudeva transcends the world eternally, but at the same time is immanent in it in the same way. Eventhough he is the only real being, still he manifests himself as Purusa (the cosmic self as well as the individual selves), Pradhana or Prakriti (the primordial energy that causes all subtle and gross existence), Vyakta (the world of differentiated existences) and Kala (time). "The essential character of Vishnu (Visnoh Paramam Padam) is eternally above and unaffected by his diversified manifestations in the forms of Purusa, Pradhana, Vyakta and Kala; but all the same such differentiated self-manifestations of Vishnu are not unreal and they are the sources of productions, harmonious operations, systematic changes, developments, destructions, etc., of all finite, conditioned derivative realities constituting the world order". (Cf. A. K. Banerjee, in *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western,* ed. by S. Radhakrishnan, 2 ed., vol. 1, 1957, p. 121-122.

nor unhappiness...Nothing exists besides. So this term is suitable only to Saguna Brahman. But in some others' view, sat, chit, ananda can very well refer to the attributeless Brahman. These words are said to be used in a negative sense. Sat indicates that Brahman is not non being; Chit, that Brahman is not nescient; and Anandam, that Brahman is not a mere absence of pain. Thus the absolute nature of Brahman is affirmed.

Brahman as Sat.

Upanishads frequently use the term Satyam, which means truth Reality, Being, Existence etc., to describe the nature of Brahman.[30] Brahman does not exist as an empirical object. He is the absolute existence, without which material objects would not be perceived or existing. The empirical reality of a mirage is derived from the reality of the desert. The universe is transitory, perishable and changing. Brahman alone is immutable and eternal. 'Therefore the term Sat, or Existence as applied to Brahman, is to be understood as the negation of both empirical reality and its correlative, unreality.[31]

Brahman as Chit

The Chit or consciousness of Brahman, unlike the consciousness of the mind, is not related to an object. Brahman is Chit, since it is identical with Atman or Self. In the Upanishads, the very conception of Atman implies that it is the knowing subject within us.[32] So the Brahman that is in us is, Consciousness, knowledge and Light. Brahman needs no other light to illumine itself. It is self-luminous.[33]

Brahman as Anandam

Anandam or absolute bliss is understood as the negation of happiness that is normally experienced from the contact of a sense organ with its object. Brahman is bliss, properly, on account of the absence of duality such as fear, jealousy, grief etc.,

30. *Tai. Up. ii.* 1. 1.
31. S. Nikhilananda, *Hinduism*, p. 33. This teaching is in line with the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta.
32. Cf. The discourse of the sage Yajnavalkya to Maitareyi, in *Br. Up.* ii. iv. 5.
33. *Mu. Up.* ii. II. 10.

in it. It is so because in it there is an utter absence of sorrow and also because it is infinity.[34] The Bliss of Brahman pervades all subjects. There is no enduring joy in the finite. The Bliss of Brahman can be likened to the bliss that accompanies deep sleep, when there is no distinction of subject and object. It is the perfect bliss.[35]

So sat, Chit, and Anandam are not to be considered as attributes of Brahman. Instead they form it's very essence. Brahman is not the possessor of these three; but it is Existence itself, Consciousness itself and Bliss itself. In the Absolute there is no distinction between essence and attributes. Sat, Chit and Anandam denote the same entity: Absolute Being is Absolute consciousness and Absolute Bliss.

In fact the psychological theory of Augustine followed by scholastics also is based on the principle that the Divine nature is identical with existence, knowledge and Will.[36] Analysing the human knowledge and will it is revealed that to know oneself is similar to 'express oneself' and to love means to 'enter into oneself'. With regard to the creation effected by God, St. Thomas writes: "Creation is proper to the being of God, which is his essence and that is common to all the three persons. Therefore creation is not a work of anyone of the persons, but common to the whole Trinity...God is the cause of things by means of his intellect and will as a worker to his work. A worker acts by the word conceived in the intellect and moved by the love of his will to do something. God the Father made the creatures by means of his Word, that is his Son; and through his love, that

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34. *Mai. Up.* VII. 7, *Tai. Up.* ii. 5. 1.

35. In the Bhagavata P. we see that the body of Krishna, of the Gopis and of all the inhabitants in heaven is made of Ananda or joy. It means that the forms which God and the elect assume are only meant to express the divine joy. Cf. p. Johannes, S.J. *Hinduism,* London, 1952, p. 24.

36. Augustine proceeds to manifest the Trinity of the persons, from the procession of the 'Word' and 'Love' in our life. Consider the action of the intellect and the action of the Will. Procession of the Word is accomplished according to the intelligible act. But another procession is found in us, i.e., the procession of love according to the operation of the Will, according to which the beloved is in the lover as through the perception of the word, thing said or understood, is in the subject (S. Th. 1 q. 27 a. 3).

is the Holy Spirit. The reason why creatures are produced has its foundation in these processions, in as much as they include the essential attributes which are knowledge and will". And still later we read, "...To the Father is attributed power (potentia) which is manifested in creation; and so Father is creator. Wisdom (sapientia) which is attributed to Son by which the agent works through the intellect; an so it is said of the son by whom everything is formed. To the Holy Spirit is attributed goodness, to which pertains the governing, bringing the things into their proper end".[37]

Sat is described to be the existence itself. The appropriation of the entity (sat) to the Father is less frequent. But St. Augustine resorts to it more than once, "The Father is not simply the source of everything that is created—it is usually said so—but he is the entity or the very existence, as the Son is the truth or the very knowledge, and the Holy Spirit is the goodness and the Felicity.[38] In De Civitate Augustine writes, "The holy angels gain a knowledge of God not by the spoken word, but by the presence in their souls of that immutable Truth which is the only begotten Word of God. They know this Word and the Father and their Holy Spirit, understanding that each of the persons is substantial although there are not three gods but only one' (xi. 29).[39]

In the development of the Christian thought based on the revelation in N.T., we find the names of God, the Son and Spirit,

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37. S. Th. I. q. 45. 6. et ad 2m.
38. Cf. J. Bayart S.J., art. in *Nouvelle Revue Theologique,* 1933, p. 244.
39. Here God is truth, God is word and their Spirit is the Holy Spirit. Only one substance is present and only one God, but this God is in three persons.
    The identification of the 'Word' with Christ is effected in the fourth Gospel only in the prologue. 'Logos' bears another signification too. It denotes the eternal truth (aletheia), revealed by God, this truth as expressed in words, whether they be the words of Scripture or, more especially, the words of Christ. So the divine 'Logos' is not simply the uttered words. It is a rational content of thought corresponding to the ultimate reality of the universe. But in the identification of 'Logos' with Christ, He not only gives the word which is truth, but He is it; just as He not only gives life, but He is life. All that Christ is, is in His words, and He is the truth and the life (Cf. C. H. Dodd, The *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel,* Cambridge, 1968, pp. 267, 268.

expressed by their equality with the Father in power, glory and eternity. With the approval of the teaching church, the later theology defined this to be 'consubstantial' as the unity of the substance and of nature as possessing all the divine attributes, in the formula 'One God in three persons'.[40]

When we understand the revelation made by Jesus of His Father (Jn. 5. 17, 19; 9. 4), it will be clear that the relation between the Son and the Father is not static, but a dynamic one. It consists in an activity originating with the Father and manifested in the Son. It is indeed, the sharing of one life, which is of course life eternal or absolute (Jn. 5 26). This sharing of life and activity is founded in the love of God. "The Father loves the Son, and shows Him what He Himself does" (Jn. 5. 20). 'The idea, therefore, that the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son is at least closely related to the idea that the love of the Father for the Son returned by Him, establishes a community of life between Father and Son, which exhibits itself in that the Son speaks the Father's word and does His works.'[41]

When we think in fact, that the Divine Being is *Sat* (pure entity) it follows that it is *Chit* (intelligence or pure ideality) and what follows identically is *Ananda* (pure felicity). This is expressive of the divine processions. But the Hindu religious concept does not speak of any such procession in Sacchidananda. In fact Sacchidananda affirms only one thing: God is the identity of the Absolute Being, of the Absolute ideality and Absolute felicity. It does not give any idea of a God who is really one

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40. Francois Bourassa S. J., *art. cit.*, p. 262.; When we speak of 'person' in Trinity, it is not to be understood in its ordinary meaning. Here one may be ever conscious of the experiences in the history of salvation. We have the experience of the Spirit precisely as God who is one, of the Son properly as God and of the Father also properly as God. So in the One God we have the experience of the three persons. Here there is no question of any numercial quantities by the addition of which there can be difference in superiority. Divinity, which is common to all three is that which unites them. The dogma of the three persons does not indicate neither a numerical multiplication of the essence nor an equality of the personality of the three persons (Cf. K. Rahner, in *Mysterium Salutis*, opus cit., vol. iii., pp. 487, 488).

41. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* Cambridge, 1968, p. 195.

and at the same time operating in three Divine persons for the salvation of men.

Attempts have been already made by the spiritual leaders of modern India, to identify Sacchidananda with the Triune God of Christianity. Among the Hindu reformers of the nineteenth century both Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-84) and Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1906) had found in the Sacchidananda, 'an analogy of these component parts of the sanskrit name of God to the Christian Trinity: Sat corresponding to the absolute existence of the Father, Chit to the logos, and Ananda to the Holy Comforter.[42] It seems that it was Brahmobandhav Upadhyaya[43] who introduced for the first time the name Sacchidananda for the Christian idea of Trinity in the Church.[44]

The Theory of Manifestation in Trimûrti and the Holy Trinity

We were passing through the pages of the Hindu scriptures down the centuries to see the progressive development of the idea of Trimûrti. When we speak of Trimûrti, it is not the name Sacchidananda that is generally meant. Dr. Radhakrishnan writes:

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42. G. A. Mankar, *Life and Works of the late Mr. Justice M. G. Ranade*, Bombay 1902, vol. i. p. 195 (quoted by H. C. E. Zacharias, Renascent India, London, 1933, p. 45.
43. Brahmobandhav Upadhyaya (1861-1907) was a Bengali Hindu, converted into the Anglican Church. He later joined the Catholic Church. Upadhyaya argued for indigenous patterns of theology and monastic life. To this purpose he travelled to Rome, but met with only discouragement. He was of opinion that the caste system must be accepted into Christianity in its entirety.
44. Cf. M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renascence*, Madras, 1970, p. 105. C.F. Andrews quotes his 'Hymn of adoration', in which he addresses the Trinity as 'Being (sat), Intelligence (chit), and Bliss (ananda).

    "I adore"
    Being, Intelligence, Bliss.
    The highest goal,
    Despised by the world, desired by the holy saints
    ....
    I adore
    The spirit proceeding from Being and intelligence, The Blessed Creator, intense Bliss, the Sanctifier, Swift in movement, speaking through the Word, The giver of life" (C.F. Andrews, The *Renaissance in India, its Missionary Aspect*, London, 1912, p. 289. (quoted by M.M. Thomas, opus cit., pp. 105-106).

"We cannot think of God without using our imagination...The highest category we can use is that of self conscious personality, (uttama purusha). If we analyse the concept of personality, we find that it includes cognition, emotion, and will, and God is viewed as the Supreme knower, the great lover and the perfect will, Brahmã, Vishnu, Siva. These are not three independent centres of consciousness, as popular theology represents, but three sides of one complex personality. The different pictures of God which prevailed in the country were affiliated to one or the other of this trinity".[45]

Trimûrti, we find, is only an arrangement. It is a clear example of the all embracing and flexible nature of the Hindu religion.

The different modes adopted by the Absolute in its manifestation have a reasonable basis in the 'Vyavaharika' doctrine of the Advaita Vedanta.[46] "Creation, Preservation, and destruction are the activities of the conditioned Brahman, or the personal God, which can never affect His transcendental nature; they are mere waves on the surface of the ocean which cannot touch the serenity of its immeasurable depths".[47]

In our concept of God we do not speak of any such arrangement, nor do we find any necessity of doing so to safe-guard the religion from opponents. The theology developed in the Church down the centuries only tried to give adequate explanation of the truth revealed by God from the beginning of the history of the chosen race.

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45. S. Radhakrishnan, *Hindu View of Life,* p. 21.
46. The Vedantist believes in three conditions of Being-real, Practical and illusory. He affirms that the one Spirit, Brahman, alone has a real (Paramarthika) existence; yet he allows a practical (vyavaharika), separate existence to human spirits, to the world, and to the personal God or Gods; also an illusory (Pratibhasika) existence. Hence every object is to be dealt with practically as if it were really what it appears to be: a God is a God, a man is a man and a beast a beast.
47. S. Nikhilananda, *Hinduism* p. 36.

Conclusion

Considering deeply the various aspects of the Hindu concept of God, or Supreme Being, and in our case Trimûrti in particular we came across points of convergence and divergence with the theology of Holy Trinity. What is most striking is that in varied and particular cases, though the explanations appear to be almost the same, in a deep research it becomes clear that they are not always so. The fundamental difference in the two concepts gather around some specific points in the two religions:

—The concept of the Supreme Being in Christian theology and faith.

—The role of Iswara.

"The basic difference", in the words of P. Fallon, "Is in the starting point. In Hinduism we, human beings, start thinking of God, either as the impersonal Absolute, or to hide his majesty in thousand myths; in the Christian revelation God starts, the Father reveals himself in Jesus Christ as the God of great majesty, and of greatest love".[48] But we have to consider the problem of God, the unity and Trinity in God, in the history of salvation. In the Theology the whole economy of salvation has a trinitarian structure. It is a joint operation of all the three persons, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. God and the Father are synonyms. When we speak of God, we understand the one God, in three persons, who created and redeemed us. They are so mystically united that no operation is effected by one outside of the other two. Yet we must admit that the Trinity is a mystery of salvation, otherwise it would never have been revealed. The Father reveals Himself through the Son and through Him reaches man in the Holy Spirit.

Whatever be the philosophical explanations, the Supreme Brahman of the vedantists, remains beyond the realm of mystery, if we can say so. This is so subtle and abstract that even its existence could be doubted. About this paradoxical Being it is said, 'Brahman is Brahman, but does not even know that it is, Brahman. That is why in a certain sense Brahman is *Not*.[49] This being, as such can have no relation with anything, not only

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48. F. Fallon S.J., in *Religious Hinduism*, by Jesuit Scholars, p. 81.
49. Raymond Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ*......p. 123.

because it is an absolute Spirit, but also nothing can be conceived outside of him. Brahman is *Ekam Eva Advaitam* (one without a second). This idea of a Supreme cannot be compared with any Christian concept of God. Swami Vivekananda, the great vedantist of modern times says, "What is the God of Vedanta? He is principle, not person. You and I are personal Gods. The absolute God of the universe, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe, is impersonal principle. You and I, the cat, rat, devil, and ghost, all these are its persons—all are personal Gods. You want to worship personal Gods. It is the worship of your own self.[50] It is evident that this Absolute God and our God the Father have nothing in common.

The Role of Iswara

The conditioned Brahman is also known as Iswara (Cf. chap. II, p. 50). The name Iswara is definitely a later introduction. In the more ancient texts as in Rig Veda the name Iswara is not found. The function of Iswara was assigned to the different gods of the Hindu pantheon. But those gods were not considered to be the manifestations of Iswara. The concept of Iswara developed by the Vedantic thought is the centre of our attention.[51]

First of all, we know that the idea of a personal God under the name Iswara is not a revealed truth. Then whence come the concept of Iswara in Hindu Theology? Iswara is a product of the speculative process as the personal aspect of the Impersonal Brahman. "He is properly speaking the revelation of Brahman, the first outcoming as it were of the unfathomable womb of Brahman. He is properly God".[52] The world process of crea-

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50. Vivekananda, *Is Vedanta, The Future Religion*?, p. 21.
51. It is in the Bhakti schools that Iswara acquires his predominance. The personal God seems to be absorbing the whole Godhead, for Brahman is mentioned much less. Still Iswara's name is not the most popular one. As Brahman is considered to be a kind of ultimate in the metaphysical level, Iswara is also a certain supreme in the phenomenal level. But the Bhaktas are conscious that when they worship Gods like, Rama, Krishna, Vishnu and Siva, it is Iswara whom they are worshipping. Cf. Raimondo Panikkar, *Maya e Apocalisse*, Roma (year not given), pp. 339-342.
52. Raymond Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ......*p. 122.

tion, conservation, destruction etc., are to be referred to this personal God, while of the Supreme Being such acts cannot be conceived, as there cannot be anything existing outside of him. So Iswara attains the position of the Supreme God in the religious or devotional sphere.

This Iswara does operate not through any one distinct and separate from him, nor through any one of his representations. But He himself does everything. He acts by means of the different aspects he assumes. These aspects have been personified adapting themselves to the various functions. Thus the three important gods Vishnu and Siva, together with Brahmã, who are only three different aspects or manifestations of the Saguna Brahman or Iswara have been conceived and they are grouped together forming trimûrti. Here one must bear in mind that 'among the great personalised deities of later Hinduism neither Vishnu nor Siva were new creations'.[53] These Gods are considered to be personal gods, even though in the back ground of strict vedantic doctrine, it cannot be admitted. Really what is achieved here is not only the unification of the important Hindu sects as is generally stated, but also the reconciliation of the doctrine of the personal God with the metaphysical principle of the impersonal God: For God considered in himself or 'ad intra', is impersonal; 'ad extra', indeed, in three persons in the said threefold relations to the world, and that is Trimûrti.[54]

Does this Iswara in his operation act as God the Father, who is creator and so on? We do not think of the Father excluding the Son and the Spirit, for the Father does not operate by Himself, but He acts in the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. Their intimate union is evident from the very words of Jesus. He tells the disciples that when they will be delivered before the judges for His name in the time of persecution, "do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you (Mt. 19-20).

The theory of manifestation finds its equivalent in the teachings of Modalists and Sabellianists. Father, Son and Spirit are

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53. Max Weber, *The Religion of India*, p. 188.
54. C.B. Papali, *Hinduismus*, vol. ii. p. 184.

names of the one and only God. But in the exaggerated view of the one God in different sects of Hinduism as when gods like Vishnu and Siva operate completely independent of the other gods, we meet with the theory of Tritheism.

Hinduism arrives at this conclusion through their philosophy. It is often considered that even Spirit is a composition of matter and form. Pure intelligibility, which acts as the soul of the Spirit is its essence. Spiritual substance is like body which acts as the foundation of individuation and personality. According to some schools even God requires a certain spiritual body for his operation. So God, when He decides to act ad extra assumes this spiritual body. In fact He assumes one for creation, a second for conservation and a third for consummation or destruction of the world.[55]

We see here two religions following two different paths, in their development of the idea of God and their personal salvation. "In Hinduism men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an unspent fruitfulness of myths and through searching philosophical enquiry".[56] But even with all the differences, both share in many common points, that will help us to begin a mutual dialogue. The words of Lumen Gentium sound always in our ears that the divine providence will not deny, 'the help necessary for salvation to those who without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life thanks to His grace'.[57]

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55. Cf. C.B. Papali, *Hinduismus*, vol. ii. p. 184.
56. Conc. Vat. II, *Nostra Aetate*, 2.
57. Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16.

B) An Attempt to formulate an Indian Christian Theology

Our attitude towards the other religions is undergoing a very serious change ever since the first impulse we experienced from the Second Vatican Council. In the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian religions, the Council acknowledged for the first time in history, the search for the Absolute by other men and by whole races and peoples, and honoured the truth and holiness in other religions as the work of the one living God. Here the Church was acknowledging the universal presence of grace and its activity in the many religions of mankind.[1] The distinction suggested by pope John between the substance of the ancient doctrine contained in the "deposit of faith" and its formulation was a great source of inspiration to all for further thinking.[2] Pope Paul VI expressed this change of attitude of the Church in his inaugural address of the second session of the Ecumenical council. He declared, 'The Church looks beyond her own sphere to the other religions which have preserved the sense of the Divine and the idea of the one Supreme and transcendent Creator and Preserver. These religions venerate God by sincere acts of piety, a piety, which like other convictions, form the foundations of their moral and social life. The Catholic Church sees—not without regret in these religions gaps and errors. But it cannot but turn also to them in order to tell them that the Catholic religion gives due respect to whatever truth, goodness and humanity she finds in them...'.[3]

It is in the background of such an encouraging change in the official teachings of the Church, that we evaluate our study

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1. Cf. John M. Oesterreicher, in the '*Commentary on the Documents of Vatican* II, vol. iii. p. 1.
2. The substance of the ancient doctrine, contained in the "deposit of faith", is one thing, its formulation quite another' (quoted by E.L. Mascall, *The secularization of Christianity,* London, 1965, p. 1.
3. S.S. Paolo VI, *Encicliche e Discorsi,* (Ed. Paoline), vol. 1. Rome, 1964, pp. 217, 218.

of the Hindu concept of God regarding the Trimûrti with a view to start for the building up of an Indian Christian theology.

Why Christianity did not succeed in India?

It has been often sounded that if the Fathers of the Church, and later the Scholastics and St. Thomas could baptize the Greek philosophy in order to interpret the Catholic dogma, why can't the Church do such an adaptation with regard to the Indian philosophy too? It is a general cry that, it is because of the western methods of presenting the Christian doctrine to the Indian people that India remains outside the embrace of Christianity even today. But after a thorough understanding of the Indian people in their socio-religious and politico-cultural fields, one may say that this complaint is only partially true. The fundamental reason for the failure can be said to be 'ignorance' or 'misunderstanding'. The ignorance we speak of is not regarding the contents of our message. Instead, it is the ignorance of the man to whom the Christian message is explained. We have to admit that it has been very rare for any one in the past, to know what the Indian thought or believed, neither was there any attempt to understand his religion with its manifold customs and rites. When the messengers of the Gospel concentrated all their attention on the message and ignored the spiritual field where the receiver was living, it was like the sowing of the seeds in some unprepared ground. Hence our present endeavour to understand Hinduism itself thoroughly and from within.

Lack of unity among the Christian Churches also was one of the chief handicaps in our confrontation with the ancient Indian thought and religion. It seems that many of our earnest apostles are not conscious of this fact even today. Till now, the individual christian churches—the catholic, different protestant and orthodox churches—faced Hinduism each in its own way. To a Hindu completely ignorant of Christianity, Christ was not presented as the one and only God who incarnated Himself for the salvation of Humanity, in the proper way. As a matter of fact, sometimes Christianity has become the cause of strifes and separation, instead of acting as a leaven of unity and peace. Those who were attracted by the sublime doctrines of Christ, could not either appreciate or understand the real difference between these

different Christian Churches. To their eyes Christ is one, and so all those who follow Him form only one group. The real difficulty arose when each single Christian Church tried to explain the different dogmas and beliefs.

India's Quest for God

For every Indian the problem of God and religion has been of primary importance. This attitude is not different for the majority of Indians even today. To a group of the members of other Religions assembled in Bombay, in 1964, Pope Paul said, 'Yours is a land of ancient culture, the cradle of great religions. Your country has been seeking God with untiring yearning, in profound meditation and silence, in the hymns of fervent prayers. Rarely such an ardent desire of God has been expressed with insistence full of the spirit of the Advent, as in the words written in your sacred books, many centuries before Christ, "From unreal lead me to the real; from darkness lead me to light; from death lead me to immortality (Br. UP. i. 3. 28).[4]

The past Attempts

Hitherto the main attempt was centred on adaptation of Indian culture into Christianity. Unfortunately all those attempts made, were conducted within the scholastic frame-work not easily intelligible to the Indian system of thought. The major attempt in this line in the near past was done by Fr. Johannes, S. J. of the Calcutta school. He did not stop at pointing out questions common to both East and West. But he went further seeking a synthesis of elements of Eastern thought that are of perennial value. He tried to find out 'Christ through Vedanta'. But the result was the formation of a system that was neither Indian nor

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4. S.S. Paul VI, *Encicliohe e Discorsi,* opus cit., vol, I, p. 433; Lal Behari Day (1824-1894), who was a Bengali Christian (Anglican) once wrote, "A Hindu is the most religious being in existence. He puts his bed religiously, anoints his body religiously, washes his body religiously, dresses religiously, sits religiously, stands religiously, learns religiously, remains ignorant religiously, and becomes irreligious religiously" (Lal Behari Day, *An Antidote to Brahmanism in Four Lectures,* Calcutta, 1867, p. 88).

Western, and that might be the reason why Fr. Johann's work was not carried on further.[5]

A very general knowledge of the people, combined with certain philosophical terms from the Vedanta or some other philosophical schools is quite inadequate when we try to present the christian doctrine adapted to the Indian mentality.[6] Dr. J. R. Chandran,[7] who has made a systematic study of Swami Vivekananda's views of Christ and Christianity and the formulation of principles of Christian apologists in relation to them, in the light of the writings of Origen 'Against Celsus', warns that great care should be taken in biblical exegesis in India not to be misguided by false similarities, but must try to probe deeper into the thought of the writers and seek the original message.[8] Further, we find that in the Greco-Roman world philosophy and religion went their separate ways indifferent of each other. When the Christian thinkers built their theology on sound rational foundations following the Greek philosophers, the popular religion was completely disregarded. The Sky God Zeus, the Jupiter of the Romans, the imperial cult etc.,[9] could not find any way of entrance into Christian worship. But in the formation of an Indian Christian

5. Cf. J. Neuner, S.J., Towards an Indian Theology', in *Clergy Monthly Supplement to vol. XLVII.* no. 11, vol, 6, Dec. 1963, p. 316.
6. Here it is good to remember that the development of theology in the patterns of Greek philosophy, also did not take place without any difficulty. It really resulted out of the interpretations and reinterpretations of certain formulas and principles by Christians themselves in the course of many centuries. It was due to such multifarious and sometimes contradicting presentations of the church doctrines by great men of Christendom, who were all well versed in the philosophy and mentality of the people around them, that the so called Christological and Trinitarian heresies too were proposed. Such errors or misunderstandings helped the teaching Church in a negative way to look deep into the problems, and finally to present the dogmas in an acceptable way.
7. Dr. J. Russel Chandran is principal of the United Theological College, Bangalore. He has been a Vice-Chairman of the World Council of Churches, and chaired some of the sessions of the Uppsala assembly in 1968.
8. Cf. M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* Madras, 1970, p. 137.
9. Cf. W. Rees, The Pagan World in New Testament Times, art in *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture,* by Reginald C. Fuller and others, London, 1969, pp. 784-793.

theology we have to consider all these points. In Hinduism religion and philosophy are so united together that it is impossible to treat one independent of the other. In our study on Trimûrti too, we met with the philosophical explanations of the manifestations of God.[10]

Eventhough each Christian denomination tried to establish its own proper outlook, it very often failed to see Hinduism from the same point of view. Hinduism should not have been dealt with as if it were a religion with a single founder, one doctrine, one faith and a definite form of worship. Instead, the different elements that fuse together to form Hinduism, such as the different philosophical schools (including even the materialistic school, Carvaka), the Bhakti schools, the different sects etc., should have been understood and faced individually. What we have done was a very global and generic attempt which was quite insufficient.

New Tentatives

Though a bit late, it is still encouraging that the whole Church of India has now become conscious of the serious problem of her relations with other Religions; how she can manifest herself to them as the 'Lumen Gentium'. The All India National Seminar held at Bangalore, in May 1969, gives some guide-lines to this effect.[11] The assembly felt the need of an Indian Theology, that would grow from the personal reflection of the people of God on the Word of God. The Indian Church does not think of the possibility of a single Indian Christian Theology; rather the aim should be to allow various schools of Christian Theological thought to blossom in the diverse cultural patterns of the

10. When we speak of Indian philosophy, it would be quite improper if we limit ourselves to the Advaita system of Vedanta as if it were the only philosophical school of India. It is true that it is the most popularly known system of Indian thought in the Western world. But in a more comprehensive and thorough study as that we are engaged into, the Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja and the other philosophical schools and systems cannot be omitted.

11. Here we prefer to concentrate ourselves on the suggestions for a new theology. For the various recommendations for a fruitful dialogue with the non-Christians, see *All India Seminar, Church in India Today,* Bangalore, 1969, publ. by C.B.C.I. Centre, New Delhi), pp. 342-343.

country'.[12] So a pluralistic theology, adapted to the different parts of India, with its dissimilar social and cultural background, has been envisaged.[13]

But before discussing the suggestions of the All India Seminar it is necessary that we should know two other important factors: (i) What the non-Christians think of Christ and Christianity; for no one denies that eventhough Christianity has been presented in the Western form, the great Indian social and religious reformers of modern times never turned a deaf ear to the message of Christ. It is said that Mahatma Gandhi had done more to bring Christ to India than all the missionaries had accomplished in three centuries.[14] (ii) What the non-Catholic brethren are

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12. Ibid., p. 346.
13. When we speak of pluralism in Indian Theology, in the background of the difference in the cultural and religious set up in India, we have to make certain considerations. Difference in belief or worship of the gods of the Hindu Pantheon in the various parts of the country does not immediately and necessarily lead to a difference in a theological system. They actually point out to a variation in worship, in liturgy. It deals with the worshipful religion of the people. But when we try to formulate a theological system we are trying to give a rational explanation of the faith and worship found in the religion. It is here that the different philosophical schools come to our help. Christian doctrine is essentially one. But the interpretation of it in the light of the different, philosophical thinking of India may not be always same. The Church experiences this diversity in theological thinking ever since the early centuries as in the case of the schools of Alexandria, Antioch etc. It is certain that India cannot follow simply the methods adopted by the Churches of the East and the West in the past centuries. "Theology, since it is ever pursuing the living God, is and must be open thought, engaged in the real and open to continual enrichment from all created reality, which faith holds to be expressive of God. This entails a critical function of theology" (Edward George Bozzo, C.F.X., *Theology and Religious Experiences*, art. in Theological Studies, Sept. 1970, vol. 31, no. 3, p. 431). When we realise the special situation in India, we will find that in the formulation of an Indian Theology, philosophical thinking, worshipful religion and mythology must work together. It seems that the All India Seminar was speaking of this aspect when it declared, 'In the pluralistic cultural setting of India, it would be unthinkable to conceive of a single Indian Christian system of Theology' (Cf. *All India Seminar, Church in India Today*, p. 346).
14. C.F. T.K. Paul, *The British Connection with India*, London, 1928, pp. 145-148.

doing in the same field where we are now just going to enter. It may be quite unreasonable to disregard them, especially at this time when the Church expresses her willingness to collaborate with the other Christian communities in various fields of activity. For the ordinary non-Christian in India, Christianity is one and the same religion without any distinction of Catholic or non-Catholic. So they also face the same problems in their confrontation with Hinduism. By a coordinate work in formulating the basic principles of our approach to the other religions, we can spare many an unnecessary labour.

(I) Non-Christians see Christ and Christianity

Before all we must bear in mind that no theology can be made based only on the hitherto acknowledged fundamental principles of Hinduism. Hinduism is, or was, both a social system and a religion. We have already seen its primary presuppositions such as transmigration, the cyclic concept of birth, death, rebirth, the yearning for liberation, etc. But its social frame-work has from the very early times, based on the caste system. The system of caste has become so strong and complicated that it got predominance over all the other aspects of Hinduism. R. C. Zaehner writes, 'In matters of belief it mattered not at all whether one believed in one God or many or in none at all, nor did it much matter on how one interpreted 'liberation' or whether one rejected it outright, so long as one fulfilled the duties prescribed for one's caste...To ignore caste or reject the Veda was to put oneself outside the pale of Hinduism'.[15]

But the Hinduism, touched by the reform movements of the nineteenth century and inspired by the moral and ethical principles and social reforms of Gandhi, is quite different from the religion of a century ago.[16] Many things once considered to be

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15. R.C. Zaehner, *Hinduism*, p. 8.
16. Indeed Gandhi's voluntary acceptance of suffering and his final death for the realisation of social, political and religious justice and peace of mankind—in a word 'Truth'—have no parallel in the whole Hindu system, which always explained the suffering in the world by the doctrine of Karma. Willing to suffer for the cause of others, impelled by the love for Truth, Gandhi took upon himself the Karma of others.

forming the essentials, have been discarded. Still the hard core of Hinduism remains untouched.

Before all let us see what attitude the non-Christians have been taking in their confrontation with Christ and Christianity.[17] (i) Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1883) is remembered as the prophet of Indian nationalism. He founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1830, which was greatly influenced by Christian principles. After his strenuous studies in different religions, Ram Mohan Roy stated, 'The consequence of my long and uninterrupted studies into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles, and better adapted for the use of rational beings than any other which have come to knowledge'.[18] And in this conviction the great Hindu reformer published an important book in 1820, titled 'The Principles of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness.' But the idea of a suffering Christ was incomprehensible to him. Manilal C. Parekh (1885-1967) writes on this point; '...It was at this fundamental fact which is the foundation of Christianity, viz. God's humiliation of Himself in His love of man, that Ram Mohan Roy along with so many philosophers in the past as well as in the present stumbled.'[19]

It is well known that Brahmosamaj was fully inspired by Christian doctrines. (ii) Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884), though came much nearer to Christ, remained always a conservative Hindu. He is the founder of the New Dispensation of the Spirit. He was convinced that Christ came to fulfil Hinduism. Keshub declares: 'He comes to fulfil and perfect that religion of communion for which India has been panting, as the hart panteth after the waterbrooks. Yes, after long centuries shall this communion be perfected through Christ.[20]

Keshub's statement on Holy Trinity is very important. He

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17. The present work does not allow us to treat this subject in detail. So we will rest satisfied with mentioning some pertinent remarks made by some of the most important reformers, from Raja Ram Mohan Roy onwards.
18. Cf. J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, Delhi 1967, p. 32.
19. M.C. Parekh, *Rajarshi Ram Mohan Roy*, Rajkot, 1927, p. 29. (quoted by M.M. Thomas, opus cit., p. 32).
20. Cf. J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious*...p. 62.

speaks: 'Gentlemen, look at this clear triangular figure with the eye of faith, and study its deep mathematics. The apex is the very God Jehovah, the Supreme Brahma of the Vedas. Alone, in His own eternal glory, He dwells. From Him comes down the Son in a direct line, an emanation from Divinity. Thus God descends and touches one end of the base of humanity, then running all along the base permeates the world, and then by the power of the Holy Ghost drags up regenerated humanity to Himself. Divinity coming down to humanity is the Son; Divinity carrying up humanity to heaven is the Holy Ghost.[21] (iii) Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), who presented Vedanta as the universal religion was not ignorant of Christianity. In his commentary on John 1. 1., He says, "The Hindu calls this Maya, the Manifestation of God because it is the power of God—the Absolute reflecting through the universe is what we call Nature. The Word has two manifestations, the general one of Nature and the special one of the great Incarnations of God —Krishna, Budha, Jesus and Rama Krishna. Christ the special manifestation of the Absolute is known and knowable. The Absolute cannot be known; we cannot know the Father, only the Son. We can only see the Absolute through the tint of humanity, through Christ.[22]

Very often we find the Hindu reformers making use of the Christian terms to explain their religion.[23] (iv) The views of Radhakrishnan, the living authority of Hinduism in our days, on Christ and Christendom, cannot be left unnoticed, when we are engaged into the formulation of a new Theology. His 'writings has the character of Hindu Apologetics in which he seeks to re-define Hinduism for the intellectuals of modern India, from the standpoint of Advaita Vedanta bringing out its adequacy for contemporary life and interpreting and evaluating Christ and Christianity within its context.'[24] Radhakrishnan maintains that Hinduism, otherwise known as Sanatana Dharma,[25] can include also the essential principles of Christianity, in which case, 'Chris-

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21. *Ibidem,* p. 63.
22. *The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda,* vol. vii. p. 1.
23. Since the attitude of Gandhi, towards Christianity is much spoken of, I leave it here.
24. Cf. M. M. Thomas, opus cit., p. 156.
25. Hinduism is considered to be without beginning and without end. It is a religion for all times and all peoples.

tianity and Hinduism are not alternatives which call for a choice between the one and the other. What is called for is a recognition of the fact that in reality Christianity is part of Hinduism.[26]

It is this all embracing nature of Hinduism, that we must always keep in mind, lest we also may get absorbed into it. Raymond Pannikar, who is the pioneer in searching the 'unknown Christ in Hinduism', tells of the manner how a Hindu may react to the message of Christ. "My first reaction would be the typically Indian one of hospitality. I will welcome this Christ and this Christian from across the sea, who says that he comes with a message of salvation. I shall try to integrate this Christ into my Pantheon, receive him with an open heart, try to understand his message, and even worship him...I will give Christ a place of honour. I will be moved by the Sermon on the Mount, moved also by Gethsemane, and perhaps even fall in love with the story of his life told by these messengers who speak of a Saviour and of universal love. But I still remain a Hindu living in the context of at least fourty centuries of deep rooted pluralism..."[27]

The Hindus have no difficulty in loving or even worshipping Christ. They respect Him as a great Teacher, a moral and spiritual leader. They gladly give Him a place among their gods and religious men. But what is most difficult for them is to recognise in Him a unique position. Jules Monchanin wrote in 1951, 'All that a Christian can do is to be a testimony of Christ before them and to prepare from afar His advent, in the way of John Baptist'.[28]

2) *Non-Catholic endeavours to the Formation of an Indian Christian Theology*

Our non-Catholic brethren began their decisive endeavour for

26. P. D. Devanandan, *Christian Concern in Hinduism*, Bangalore, 1961, p. 4 (quoted by M. M. Thomas, opus cit., p. 173).
27. Raymond Pannikar, *Confrontation Between Hinduism and Christ*, art. in *Logos*, June, 1969, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 43-51.
28. Cf. Jules Monchanin, *Ecrits Spirituels*, Paris, 1965, p. 99. Abbe Monchanin was a French missionary to India, since 1939. In 1950, he in the company of Don Henri Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda, another French missionary), found a hermitage (ashram) at Kulitali, on the banks of the river Kavery, in the Hindu model to come closer to Hindu spirituality. J. Monchanin died in the year 1957.

a theology proper to India, almost three decades ago. The theological conference held at Poona in 1942 was the first significant organised attempt in this field. A second important conference of this type was held in Jabalpur in the year 1964, where it was discussed on the impact of the modern studies of New Testament Christology and that of the early Church, for forming an Indian Christology. The Conference drew four principles from the New Testament studies which are worth mentioning.

(i) 'The classical Trinitarian and Christological formulae' do not bind, but rather show, 'how the Church in certain historical situation had the courage to launch out into non-Christian categories of thought in order to set forth the uniqueness of Christ'

(ii) The N.T. has 'no standard Christological system or synthesis,...most christological titles could indeed be considered Christological possibilities two thousand years ago as well as today.

(iii) The wide range of possibilities 'does not set limits to present-day Christological thinking but calls for a similar broad range of approach to Christology'.

(iv) Since theology is, 'the concern not of individuals but of the Church as a whole', the final criterion of validity for any theology is its endorcement through the Church in its discerning members'.[29]

We have discussed this neither to imitate nor to approve everything others are doing, but to be aware of them lest we may get engaged into unnecessary initial enquiries, which may result only in mere duplication.[30]

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29. Cf. W. M. Roth, *'An approach to the New Testament Christology'* Religion and Society, XI, September, 1964, pp. 56-60 (quoted by M. M. Thomas, p. 323).

30. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the protestants and other non-Catholics are engaged in the same task of evangelising India, as we are doing. Christ presented by them and by us is received in the same way by the Hindu brethren. In the resolution of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in New Delhi, in 1961, we read, "The missionary task is not terminated. Instead, it has entered into a new phase with greater risks. The attention or our mutual relations should not make us forget that the two third of the humanity is ignorant of Jesus Christ who is the light of the world. We should transmit to them this knowledge.

It is in the light of these important points, we have discussed, that works may be done according to the directives of the Bangalore Seminar.

The New Catholic Attempts

In the All India National Seminar three main approaches were considered in the formulation of an Indian Christian theology.

1) Interiority Mysticism
2) Use of myths and images
3) Theology of World and Matter.

(1) *Interiority:* In accordance with the traditional ways of Hindu spiritual experience, that seeks to discover God within man, the problem is of unique importance. Here we may find a common ground for a meeting place for Hinduism and Catholic Church. As for example the three steps of spirituality in Hinduism:—

(a) Sravana (listening to the word of God)
(b) Manana (intellectual enquiry)
(c) Nidhi dhyasana (inward realisation of Truth), have a parallel in Christianity in,

(a) The recognised need for listening to the word of God
(b) Dogmatic Theology
(c) Realisation of the kingdom of God within us.

(2) *Use of Myths and Symbols*

Since the Indian tradition is rich in the use of myths and images as Christ preached in parable, it would be of great value, if we express the Christian faith through the myths and images of the Indian tradition.

(3) *The Theology of World and Matter*

Emphasis should be laid on the sacredness of the world in

We do not have greater rights than them over the person of Christ. By no other benefit we may offer to them, we are absolved from this task" (Cf. C. Boyer e D. Bellucci, *Unita Cristiana e Movimento Ecumenico,* Roma, 1963, p. 272).

which the Word of God took flesh—it is important to stress the value of the secular and to incorporate the world redeemed into the Risen Christ.[31]

The field into which the Catholic church of India has just entered is not an easy one. We see that the success of this attempt to formulate an Indian Christian Theology (Though not uniform and systematic for the whole India, as the National Seminar voiced) depends upon a number of factors.[32]

We do not confront a people completely ignorant of Christ and Christianity. Our attempt is to point out to them Christ who has been, and who is, always present to them, and working among them, even though they could not realise Him in the proper way (cf. Acts. 17. 22-28).

We must ever bear in mind that there is only one God who is the creator and Saviour of all. The words of St. Paul are inspiring and encouraging; "Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is One" (Rom. 3. 28).

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31. Cf. All India Seminar, *opus cit.*, pp. 346-347.
32. Some there are who think that a selection and then a final synthesis of the moral and ethical principles in different religions suitable for a good practical life is enough to the formation of a theology. In this endeavour even the religion itself may be considered as a society, as any other society or organisation in the world. But such an attempt, though attract many in the outset, rarely withstand the great trials that await them. It is what happened to the Brahma Samaj, founded by Ram Mohan Roy. The Samaj is now a spent force in India, devoid of any power to inspire or to lead. J.N. Farquhar is right in pointing out that, 'Ram Mohan and Keshab were wrong in thinking that a new, vigorous, modern religion could be created merely by placing a few of the leading ideas of Christianity alongside a few of the leading ideas of Hinduism and allowing the two to come together in equal terms' (ERE. vol. ii., art. on Brahmanism, p. 823). The Indian Church cannot take a negative or indifferent attitude to mysticism and metaphysics to give more accent to morality. All these different elements are to be united together, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that an appropriate theology may be generated.

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